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Irish politician to take abortion pill in Dublin in defiance of republic's ban

Socialist TD Ruth Coppinger, along with 30 other pro-choice activists, to receive pills in defiance of country's laws

[Henry McDonald](#) in Dublin
[The Guardian](#), Tuesday 28 October 2014 22:55 GMT
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Pro-choice supporters hold placards in front of the Irish parliament building in Dublin. Photograph: Peter Muhly/AFP/Getty Images

An Irish parliamentarian is to take an illegal abortion pill in Dublin to defy the continued ban on most terminations in the Republic.

The Socialist party's TD Ruth Coppinger travelled to Northern Ireland on Tuesday along with 30 other pro-choice activists to receive abortion pills from the pro-choice organisation Women on Web.

The Irish state still bans abortion pills and last year the Republic's Customs service seized more than 1,000 tablets that were posted from Britain and Europe to Irish women seeking to terminate their pregnancies.

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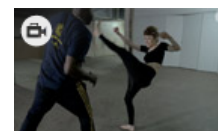
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Despite recent reforms that allowed for limited abortions in the state where a woman's life is in danger either through medical complications or if she is in danger of taking her own life, most Irish women seeking terminations still have to obtain them abroad.

Women who are raped and those whose babies will be stillborn are not entitled in law to have abortions in Irish hospitals.

The pro-choice group has branded their action as the "abortion pill train", named after a similar protest in the 1970s when a group of Irish feminists travelled on the Enterprise express train to Belfast to buy condoms. They challenged the state to have them arrested when they arrived back in Dublin's Connolly station with the contraceptives. At the time condoms were illegal in the republic.

Coppinger said most Irish people were now far ahead of politicians in terms of liberalising the country's abortion laws. She said she would take one of the pills herself, stressing that they were safer than taking Viagra.

"They [politicians] continue to give Catholic beliefs centrality when a large majority now favour allowing abortion to protect women's health, both physical and mental," Coppinger said before her trip north.

The women will travel back from Belfast to Dublin on Tuesday, where they will attend a rally to mark the second anniversary of the death of Indian dentist Savita Halappanavar. [She died in Galway University hospital](#) after being refused a termination even though she knew the child she was carrying was dead and that she would suffer severe blood poisoning if the pregnancy continued.



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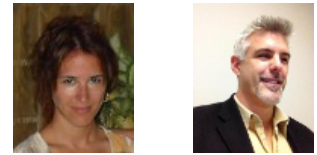
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99 comments. Showing conversations, threads sorted

4 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



onalongsabbatical

28 October 2014 2:31pm

92

Good for them. The death of Savita Halappanavar was preventable, awful, and unforgivable.

Ireland needs to change, over so many things.



labowe onalongsabbatical

28 October 2014 3:21pm

24

Yes indeed but as long as the RC church has ANY say in Irish society there will be limited progress. Gombeen politicians, Gombeens people being led by the nose, holding on to the past, and that's speaking as an enlightened Gombeen!



rodneyt onalongsabbatical

28 October 2014 7:22pm

What other things?

Show 6 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 1:02pm

7 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



TylerBurden

28 October 2014 2:34pm

20

Does this all just boil down to religion?



AlanTyndall TylerBurden

28 October 2014 2:47pm

25

Possibly religion-enabled conservatism. If you want to boil it down further, you're left with conservatism, not religion.



hdtvdaly TylerBurden
28 October 2014 3:16pm

9

There are some in depth works regarding Irish attitudes to reproduction that are unique even amongst other formerly uber catholic countries and are better explained with reference to the legacy of the famine.

Roughly 800,000 under 12's died in the Irish famine in four years. A generation of children was removed from Ireland and this has had a funny impact on Irish culture. Even as the country became exceptionally wealthy and the power of the Catholic Church dwindled to nothing Ireland retained fertility rates more akin to developing nations than OCED countries.

Show 6 more replies

Last reply: 28 October 2014 5:39pm



GMonet
28 October 2014 2:34pm

64

Good for them. Public defiance is a fine way to demonstrate to the cowards in government that we are no longer living in the 1930s. Ultimately we can never again allow another woman to die like Savita Halappanavar did.

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



Underminer
28 October 2014 2:43pm

51

Its amazing that in the 21st century - and in Western Europe too - that such state-sponsored idiocy still continues. Time to get religion out of Irish politics and bring the country up to date.



hdtvdaly Underminer
28 October 2014 4:41pm

20

Monarchy, knights, duchesses, baby princes getting their arses changed in a castle, a House of Lords who has a functional role in the running of your state...would you feck off with your 21st century it's like living next door to a lord of the rings novel.



Underminer hdtvdaly
28 October 2014 5:05pm

22

Oh, I completely agree with all your points and would happily move to a republic tomorrow.

But that doesn't excuse Ireland's medieval treatment of women or theocratic tendencies!

Also, I could make analogies about The Shire vs. Mordor, but that would be childish.

Show 2 more replies

Last reply: 28 October 2014 11:43pm



YorkerBouncer
28 October 2014 2:55pm

53

Good, it should be a womans right to choose. Any civilised society should agree.

10 PEOPLE, 11 COMMENTS



WilliamMurdoch
28 October 2014 2:56pm

11

There is still a roman catholic dominance over the Republic of Ireland, they will grow as a country when they are released from it yolk.



LiviaDrusilla WilliamMurdoch

22

28 October 2014 3:11pm

when they are released from it yolk.

Eggs-actly!



hdtvdaly WilliamMurdoch

16

28 October 2014 3:30pm

Really? I'm actually from the place and can tell you this is absolute drivel as opposed to holding opinions about as relevant as my imagining London is permanently foggy, all British people wear bowler hats and to a man and woman have terrible teeth.

You come from a place with a House of Lords - that can actually delay laws passed by your elected representatives! - and a "royal family" who live in palaces and castles in the middle of your capital city! But I'm bright enough to realise this doesn't mean you're living in Narnia.

Ireland has had a historic link to Catholicism, however, it never acquiesced to all it's decrees (if it did the IRA would have folded in the 1920's and the modern Irish state would not exist in the 26 counties). The power it held was challenged in the 70's and 80's and absolutely wiped out in the 90's.

Show 8 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 7:06am



Bren Jamin

28 October 2014 2:57pm

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JPWREL

28 October 2014 2:59pm

33

Good! Anything that annoys the Roman Catholic Church is likely good for humanity's freedom.

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



LeonardL

28 October 2014 3:05pm

35

It is embarrassing that these protests are still necessary in a first world country. Ireland is a progressive and liberal country but on this one topic, it seems to be hamstrung by Catholic dogma, a doctrine that only an insubstantial minority still follow.

Let's have a referendum that addresses the real issue and in the interim immediately introduce legislation that allows for abortion in cases of rape, incest and fetal abnormality. That is the least that the women of this country and the memory of Savita, deserve.



saltyandtheman LeonardL

2

28 October 2014 9:28pm

Unfortunately a majority of powerful politicians have their minds chained by catholic dogma. Until there is a generational change in politics progress and women's rights will be hamstrung.



hardatwork

28 October 2014 3:24pm

2

Careful Now

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



Peter1312

28 October 2014 3:47pm



It all seems a bit Irish to me.



Jimbtho Peter1312

28 October 2014 4:29pm

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3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



MarcusClarke

28 October 2014 3:53pm

10

God are the Irish still stuck in a 1950s time warp? Priest ridden country indeed.



Barcalrish MarcusClarke

28 October 2014 4:18pm

1

That's where the contradiction lies



David Burke MarcusClarke

28 October 2014 9:31pm

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6 PEOPLE, 9 COMMENTS



spavin

28 October 2014 4:08pm

9

I'm a Brit living in Ireland, and my views on abortion have evolved somewhat in that time.

The legal status of abortion in Ireland represents the will of its people. It has been the subject of referendums and, while public mood has recently shifted post-Savita towards a more liberal approach to abortion, there is not widespread desire for abortion-on-demand.

There aren't many people in Dublin who are influenced by the Catholic church anymore. It's more that the illegality of abortion for so long makes the prospect of legal abortion feel a bit alien. I've lived here for less than a decade, and even in that time I've begun to see it as slightly weird that it's completely legal in the UK.

That's not to say that living in Ireland has made me become anti-abortion - far from it - but 'normal' is relative. The suggestion that the status of abortion in Ireland is church-led and / or 'backwards' is a somewhat myopic reading of things.



NJS1964 spavin

28 October 2014 4:19pm

8

Yes but that "normalcy" feeling you mention is due to history and no doubt stronger preaching when the church did have more influence.

I would be willing to accept it's more of a legacy type attitude but that doesn't excuse criticism.



Jimbtho spavin

28 October 2014 4:26pm

6

I'm an Englishman living in West Belfast. I agree with you, anti-abortion sentiment over here can't be dismissed as some kind of religious hangover. I can think of two atheists who are very anti-abortion (one of them can argue very coherently for his views on this issue...and no, he's not anti-feminist, before someone starts that up).

That said, I get the feeling that a lot of people are anti-abortion but if push comes to shove their pro-life credentials aren't all that strong... That's what annoys me about the Irish position on abortion (on both sides of the border) - people want to keep 'nasty abortion' out of their country, but the more liberal English position is just too convenient... Even if they moved to a fairly restrictive legal abortion regime (e.g. with a 16-week limit), it would be an improvement.

Show 6 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 7:40am



Artemis13

28 October 2014 4:14pm

6

The pills are not sold at Marie Stopes in Belfast. The abortion pill CANNOT be bought legally for ones own use in Northern Ireland. They are bought illegally online by hundreds of women in Ulster each year in the absence of access to the same thing legally and with medical aftercare on our shores. Please correct this article. Marie Stopes operate within the very restrictive law on abortion in Northern Ireland and this article is inaccurate.

3 PEOPLE, 6 COMMENTS



Artemis13

28 October 2014 4:17pm

15

Remember -the pills are illegal in Northern Ireland too. Women in Northern Ireland cannot access abortion on the NHS despite being UK tax payers, even if cases of rape or fatal foetal abnormality. The 1967 Abortion act was never extended to cover NI, where the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act still criminalises abortion. This is an all Ireland problem. Repeal the 8th, extend the 1967 act.



spavin Artemis13

28 October 2014 4:30pm

1

Had no idea about that.

It's a tricky one though, because many citizens of NI are self-declared as Irish, possessing Irish passports.

Laws on some fundamentals will invariably be fudged. That doesn't excuse it of course. Not sure if there's a ready solution that won't profoundly upset a large amount of people.



Artemis13 spavin

28 October 2014 4:35pm

12

They still pay National Insurance and are entitled to free healthcare on NHS. Last week Amnesty International survey showed 7/10 people in NI agree with abortion in certain circumstances. Our politicians are not keeping up with public opinion. <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/belfast-and-beyond/amnesty-release-poll-showing-majority-ni-back-abortion-law-reforms-doj>

Show 3 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 1:10pm

5 PEOPLE, 13 COMMENTS



ThePlathDiaries

28 October 2014 4:18pm

22

For those making remarks about the "priest ridden" and "backward" Irish, I would remind you that Northern Ireland, in UK jurisdiction imposes these archaic laws upon women here. Northern Irish women pay their National Insurance yet must pay for abortion services on the "mainland", unlike their English, Scottish and Welsh sisters.

A recent poll suggests 2/3 of the UK population are unaware of the oppression experienced by Northern Irish women, which might go some way to explain why there has been little to no support from the UK in helping Northern Irish women have bodily autonomy. So before you decry the "poor, pitiful Irish", take a look at the plight of Northern Irish women, marooned in limbo with no solidarity from across the water.



NJS1964 ThePlathDiaries

28 October 2014 4:21pm

7

Different flag, same religious legacy.



aquarius ThePlathDiaries

28 October 2014 4:59pm

4

Northern Irish/Southern Irish - all Irish The really sad thing is that both North

Northern men/ Southern men - all men. The really bad thing is that both North and South have no autonomy and birth control is still frowned upon. In the 90s, Virgin Megastore in Dublin was closed so many times for selling condoms. There was no divorce referendum until 1995 (slightly off tangent I know). I don't think it can be attributed to just the RC religion because Italy and Spain for example do not have these issues. I would suggest that as a previous poster said, that the whole of the island is subject to conservatism and in the case of the north, well if you vote these idiots in, then this is the type of shitty policy you get whereby men still seek to control women's bodies. Vote for someone else next year!

Show 10 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 4:20pm

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



bojimbo261

28 October 2014 4:52pm

Northern Ireland and the Republic are different places .



Artemis13 bojimbo261

28 October 2014 4:54pm

8

Both have restrictive laws around abortion.

3 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS



fredgladys

28 October 2014 5:33pm

4

"They [politicians] continue to give Catholic beliefs centrality when a large majority now favour allowing abortion to protect women's health, both physical and mental," Coppingier said before her trip north."

I'm surprised, I thought that the Catholic stranglehold on political decisions was a thing of the past, obviously not.



rodneyt fredgladys

28 October 2014 7:44pm

When votes become a thing of the past, so will the Catholic stranglehold



David Burke fredgladys

28 October 2014 9:34pm

Yeah it's nothing to do with Catholicism



Hagatha

28 October 2014 9:35pm

6

Go ladies go! It's high time Ireland was dragged into the 21st century on this issue, the Catholic church has done so much damage to women's reproductive health there.



tomcpatrick

29 October 2014 12:59am

4

Roman Catholics make up the largest religious group in Canada by census.---- 36%....[Yes, some are, indeed, nominal Catholics.]....We ,also, had 5 R.C Prime Ministers from 1968----2003--Trudeau, Clark, Turner Chretien & Campbell---- whether they were all ardent churchgoers matters not a fig over here -----unlike our southern neighbours.e.g.Bill Clinton, post Lewinsky , felt that he had to be seen @ church with a Bible the size of a breadbox!
Trudeau ,stated, prior to 1968(he was then the Minister of Justice), that "The State has no place in the bedrooms of the nation..".About time the Irish Gov/t took note of that fearless advocacy of citizen s* rights ---over & above all Churches

2 PEOPLE, 2 COMMENTS



joelg69

2



29 October 2014 1:38am

..so Ireland is still being run by the Roman Mafia..
..Congratulations! Western Europe's last theocracy!
..why do sane people believe men in red taffeta dresses know ANYTHING about human nature..



Donaskeigh joelg69

29 October 2014 1:10pm

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4 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



picturesoflife

29 October 2014 1:45am

Ok let me see what is here.

Lots of anti Irish guff.
Lack of tolerance with respect to freedom of religious expression or beliefs.

A complete disregard for informed/factual comment least such clash inconveniently with pre determined and biased mindsets or group think. You know the type, the 'this is my view and anything different is wrong cause I said so' type of rational.

If this comment section was a school playground we would rightly hear the cries of racism, intolerance, bigotry, mob mentality or just plain bullying. But this is the 'choice' most here seem happy with.

No the gov of Ireland is not influenced by the RCC or any other religious group. For example the head of our government is not also the supreme governor of the state religion as in the UK.

No the Irish as a nation are not all backward no more than in the UK or anyplace else. No we are not living in the fifties, and Yes we do have different views on many issues to those in the UK. But in a free world should not people, irrespective of nationality be allowed to be different? Or must we all agree with those below.

Given the lack of any credible debate, the presence or presumption of civilized behavior if people conform to your narrow views, the absence of facts, the distortion of facts (read totally ignorant and grossly inaccurate last half of last paragraph above), given all this and more, why would any intelligent, free thinking civilized person want to tolerate any of you haters below? Answer, you would be tolerated, treated with respect and listened to but not necessarily agreed with. Tolerated but not condoned. Grow up, the world is bigger than you. Guardian don't let your agenda get in the way of facts fix the above article please if not for truth then at least sacrifice your agenda for your journalistic integrity should it exist. Thank you for allowing me to comment now let the mob start their petty insults. After all it is their 'choice'.



Bryan Jamison picturesoflife

29 October 2014 2:42am

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geoining picturesoflife

29 October 2014 10:36am

The women will travel back from Belfast to Dublin on Tuesday, where they will attend a rally to mark the second anniversary of the death of Indian dentist Savita Halappanavar. She died in Galway University hospital after being refused a termination even though she knew the child she was carrying was dead and that she would suffer severe blood poisoning if the pregnancy continued.

Could you state what part of the last paragraph is "totally ignorant and grossly inaccurate". It seems strange to me that an operation wasn't performed to ensure that a dead foetus would not cause the death of a mother.

Abortion on demand is one thing, removal of a dead foetus is not an abortion.

Show 5 more replies

Last reply: 29 October 2014 1:18pm

**ploughmanlunch**

29 October 2014 5:43am

6

Women who are raped and those whose babies will be stillborn are not entitled in law to have abortions in Irish hospitals.

It cannot be reasonable to defend this policy

**Donaskeigh** ploughmanlunch

29 October 2014 11:27am

Absolutely. I don't want to see abortion become a means of contraception but for the victims of rape, etc, people with unviable or unwanted pregnancies for all sorts of reasons it should be.

**Aoife Ní Bhraudair** Donaskeigh

29 October 2014 11:38am

2

The law in Ireland stated that when a woman with a life threatening pregnancy the pregnancy will be terminated, the difference between terminating a pregnancy and an abortion is Doctors will try save both mother and child whereas abortion is the deliberate killing of the unborn child, as with regards to rape, A woman who had an abortion after rape said that not only did she have to live with the rape she also had to live knowing she killed her child and thats two things she has to live with, she thought an abortion would be a quick fix for her but she lives with it every single day.

Women in crises pregnancies should be helped not ship them off to get rid of their children.

**Donaskeigh** Aoife Ní Bhraudair

29 October 2014 12:14pm

No offence but who exactly are you replying to?

I am perfectly aware what the difference between an abortion and terminating a pregnancy is. As for shipping out women in crisis?? Who is advocating that?

I believe in free choice supported by education and advice. I believe any woman in such a terrible situation should have advice and help available to explain all the options available and the consequences of those options but ultimately the choice must be with the individual herself.

Frankly I have no idea what point you are trying to make or indeed whether you are pro choice or pro life.

**Donaskeigh**

29 October 2014 11:25am

1

Excuse my ignorance but what exactly is the difference between the abortion pill and the morning after pill.

I am pro choice but do not see abortion as a primary means of contraception as some seem to think but as a last resort for all kinds of reasons.

People having unprotected sex are idiots for all kinds of reasons, pregnancy, STD's etc but if it does happen the morning after pill is freely available in Ireland.

**Aoife Ní Bhraudair**

29 October 2014 11:28am

3

"Savita Halappanavar. She died in Galway University hospital after being refused a termination even though she knew the child she was carrying was dead and that she would suffer severe blood poisoning if the pregnancy continued."

So even when the medical experts said that Savita did not die from lack of abortion but medical negligence the media still print lies and the sheep of Ireland follow. GET THE FACTS and stop using this poor womans death to further your own murderous agenda!

**Donaskeigh** Aoife Ní Bhraudair

29 October 2014 12:27pm

1

Wow hold on there. I agree with the point that the Savita case is nearly

always misrepresented by the media/people trying to further their own agendas and that the lady died as a result of medical negligence not as a result of anything else.

However calling people who are pro choice like myself as pursuing a murderous agenda is way way way out of line. We just have opinions that are contrary to yours. I assume (perhaps incorrectly) that your stance on abortion is primarily faith based. I do not believe that anyone should be forcing others to adhere to laws based on their own personal opinions.

No one is forcing people to have abortions. I do not think abortion is a good thing, I doubt anyone does. Neither do I believe in abortion as a means of contraception but for women who are the victims of rape, incest, find themselves pregnant in bad circumstances, have unviable pregnancies, a foetus with a chronic abnormality, little chance of survival etc, etc, etc I'll be damned if I'm going to condemn them to further suffering by subjecting them to my opinions. It's bloody hard enough for them to make a decision. They need help, advice and support and yes an abortion if that is their choice.

They do not need people from the sidelines telling them they are pursuing a murderous agenda. Who are you or I or indeed anyone to judge? We live in a free country and people should be free to make their own choices even if we personally disagree with those choices.

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