

Abortion activist: 'I'll still help Northern Irish women buy pills'

Goretti Horgan says she is not afraid of police despite conviction of a 21-year-old this week for inducing a miscarriage

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A pro-choice campaigner has revealed she used her personal credit card to buy abortion pills for women in Northern Ireland to induce terminations.

Despite a 21-year-old woman being convicted on Monday at Belfast crown court of inducing a miscarriage after ingesting similar pills, Goretti Horgan from Alliance For Choice said on Tuesday that she is not afraid of being investigated by police for helping other women do the same.

Although a judge imposed a three-month jail sentence on the woman for taking the pills two years ago she avoided jail after it was suspended for two years.

Belfast crown court was told the then-19-year-old obtained the pills because she could not afford to travel to an English clinic for an abortion. The court also heard that the woman was arrested after housemates informed police that a 10-week old male foetus had been found in a liner inside the household bin at a property in Belfast.

But the sentence has enraged pro-choice organisations in Northern Ireland - the only part of the UK where abortion is illegal except in very exceptional cases. Campaigners for abortion reform fear the case could lead to more women being prosecuted for procuring and/or taking the pills.

In response to the case, Horgan said she made her credit card available for women to use as many of them do not want the pills to arrive at their home addresses.

“I have been very open about this. Over 200 women and some men signed an open letter in June saying again that the law here is irrelevant in the age of the internet and women being able to bring on early miscarriage by taking simple pills,” she said.

Horgan estimated that she has helped up to 20 women obtain abortion pills from pro-choice groups on the internet.

“These pills have been available now for 10 years. Not only are none of us particularly worried about this, we have stood outside police stations reminding police we signed letters giving them our names and addresses. We want the law sorted on this.

“The law that makes it illegal for women to take these pills is 155 years old, before the

light bulb was invented,” she added.

Under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, anyone carrying out an abortion in Northern Ireland, except under extremely limited circumstances, can be jailed for life.

A number of other women face prosecution over procuring abortion pills in Northern Ireland including a mother who is alleged to have obtained the pills for her under-age daughter who was pregnant. The mother in this case was referred to the Police Service of Northern Ireland after she took her daughter to a local hospital for treatment.

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