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## Pro-choice activists and one senator swallow abortion pills in Dublin protest

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(<http://www.twitter.com/irishcentral>) | October 28,2014 | 04:16 PM

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A group of 30 pro-choice activists (<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/politics/Irish-leader-knicker-bombed-by-abortion-protesters-at-London-dinner-VIDEO.html>) and four senators traveled from Dublin (<http://www.irishcentral.com/culture/travel/A-gorgeous-video-to-make-you-nostalgic-for-a-proper-Dublin-summer-VIDEO.html>) to Belfast (<http://www.irishcentral.com/culture/community/Irish-American-Partnership-hosts-Belfast-Lord-Mayor-Nicola-Mallon-.html>) by train yesterday to retrieve packs of abortion pills, bringing them back to Dublin's Connolly Station, where many swallowed the pill in to protest the lack of legalized abortion in Ireland.

The 8th Amendment of Ireland's constitution holds that the state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn, and guarantees to defend it, with regard to the equal right to life of the mother.

The protesters, who pulled into the station chanting "our bodies, our choice," "repeal the 8th," and "not the church, not the state, women must decide their fate," were reenacting the Contraceptive Train of 1971, where members of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement traveled to Northern Ireland by train to bring contraceptives back to the Republic, where they had been illegal.

Senator Rita Copping was among those who swallowed an abortion (<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/irishvoice/A-hypocritical-mess-Ireland-fails-the-abortion-test.html>) pill in protest.

"The purpose today was twofold. Yes, we do want to highlight the availability of these pills, which are totally safe, which are cheap – an accessible option for women – but we also want to point out that we shouldn't have to make any journey to Belfast," she said.

"We should be able to go to our own GPs, to have a discussion with them and get this prescribed."

Rita Harold, a member of pro-choice group Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity (ROSA) called attention to the difficulty and cost of the journey for women leaving Ireland to get abortions.

"It's disgraceful that people are being brought out to vote, and this life and death issue for women isn't going to be dealt with. Its not good enough that women's health and women's lives are still being put in danger, that a woman's right to choose still comes at a premium of thousands of euro," Harold said.

Ireland and Malta are the only two countries in the EU (<http://www.irishcentral.com/business/technology/Ireland-is-ideal-gateway-to-EUs-market-of-500-million-people-for-US-firms-.html>) where abortion is illegal. Since 1980, over 150,000 women have traveled from Ireland to get an abortion – approximately 12 women a day leave Ireland for the cause. Abortion in Northern Ireland is only legal in exceptional circumstances where the woman's life is at immediate risk and if there is a long-term, permanent risk to her health.

The Dublin protesters had the abortion pills delivered to their friends by an organization called Women on Web in the North. Through the organization, pills are prescribed by pro-choice doctors after the woman has filled out a form about her medical situation and health.

The protest at Connolly Station was held on the two-year anniversary of the death of Savita Halpannavar, who died in Galway from septic shock after her doctor refused to remove an infected fetus from her body while she was suffering from a miscarriage.

“A number of women have either died or suffered under the ban on abortion in this country. Savita was one and the migrant rape victim (<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Woman-denied-abortion-in-Dublin-fled-to-Britain-but-arrested-by-police-in-Liverpool.html>) over the summer was another,” Coppinger said.

“So what are we going to do, sit around and hold vigils? We also have to protest and demand that this law is changed. The women that took the action in 1971, they were going against the tide, they were breaking the law, we’re happy to challenge this unjust law today and to say the hypocrisy has to end. Enough is enough.”

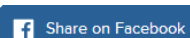
According to the Protection of Life during Pregnancy Bill, to “intentionally destroy unborn human life” is punishable by imprisonment for up to 14 years.


The activists are calling for a referendum (<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/politics/Irish-support-for-another-abortion-referendum-is-growing.html>) to repeal the 8th Amendment to be held on the same day as the Marriage Equality Referendum in Spring of 2015.

“Control of one’s fertility, through access to safe abortion, is an integral part of a woman’s right to health and equality,” said Action for Choice member Sinead Kennedy.

“Women living in Ireland must be entitled to make decisions about their own bodies and their own futures. Anything less than access to free, and safe abortion in Ireland is a violation of the fundamentals of what it is to be a human being.”

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