

DUP says it will not be 'bullied' into changing abortion stance

PSNI reviewing protest footage to determine whether any offences have been committed

🕒 about 11 hours ago

Amanda Ferguson

The DUP has said Northern Ireland will not be “bullied or bounced” into changing its abortion laws after feminist activists swallowed abortion pills outside Laganside courts in Belfast.

Anti-abortion South Down MLA Jim Wells was speaking on Thursday outside the North’s main court buildings after three pro-choice campaigners took abortion pills in front of the PSNI in defiance of the strict laws governing terminations.



On British and Irish citizens not having the same access to abortion services as those in Scotland, England, Wales, and soon the Republic of Ireland, Mr Wells said it was “entirely our right under the devolution settlement to make our own decisions on that”.

“The Assembly discussed this in detail on February 10th, 2016 and after a lengthy debate decided we did not need to change the laws in Northern Ireland and that is where we stand.

“And we are not going to be bullied or bounced into changing our laws because of what happened in the Irish Republic.”

Abortion law in Northern Ireland dates back to the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Criminal Justice Act (NI) 1945, making abortion illegal in almost every circumstance and the law some of the most restrictive in the world.

Every day it is estimated that about three women from Northern Ireland travel to England to undergo legal abortion; with many others risking prosecution for self-administering abortifacients (abortion pills) at home; or they are compelled to carry pregnancies to full term.

Under pressure

British prime minister Theresa May has come under pressure to legislate for abortion in the absence of the Stormont Assembly which collapsed in January 2017.

Amid a major PSNI presence on Thursday three young women from the socialist feminist group Rosa (Reproductive rights, against oppression, sexism and austerity) swallowed abortion pills at the event which was also attended by Solidarity-People Before Profit TD Ruth Coppinger.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

ADVERTISEMENT

When is it time to r

If you have a £250,000 portfolio de
guide for retirees written by money
Ken Fisher's firm. It's called "The
Retirement Plan." Even if you ha
something else in place right now,
makes sense to request your guid

[Request your guide n](#)

FISHER INVEST

Rosa activists Eleanor Crossey Malone, Courtney Robinson and another woman who declined to give her name took the tablets in front of a police officer who was filming them. The women declined to reveal if they were pregnant.

Police seized two small robots along with a number of pills, which were surrendered voluntarily, during the demonstration.

Chief inspector Stephen McCauley said: "Officers recorded footage of the demonstration, the details of a number of participants and have spoken with one of the event organisers.

"We will be reviewing the footage to determine whether any offences have been committed, but as we are now investigating this matter, we will not be commenting further."

Precious Life director Bernie Smyth was joined by a handful of anti-abortion protesters for a counter demonstration.

READ MORE

- » Women defy authorities by taking abortion pills in Belfast
- » Galway East result: Yes 60.19% and No 39.81%
- ⦿ Abortion referendum: Turnout hits 70% in some areas as polls close
- » Galway West result: 65.9% vote for repeal, including four islands
- » Bill on abortion law to be brought to Cabinet in July, says Harris

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Facts have no agenda. Real news has value. [Subscribe.](#)

MORE FROM THE IRISH TIMES

Irish News

Teenage boys who drowned in Clare quarry named locally

Opinion

Abortion provision is threatened by austerity

Politics

Garda should have sought new IT tenders six years ago, PAC told

Soccer

Zinedine Zidane right to leave Real Madrid before the storm

MORE IN SPONSORED

Ten HR strategies to boost productivity and retain talent

Laya Life: mortgage protection in a matter of minutes

"We can solve the greatest challenges of our time using technology and people"

The ingredient series: meet the makers

ADVERTISEMENT

Flights Amsterdam Belfast?



EUR 109 *T
KLM

SUBSCRIBE NOW