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WOMEN ON WAVES, BRINGING ABORTIONS TO A PRO-LIFE NATION NEAR YOU

By Rebecca Fitzsimons



Women on Waves is a Dutch ship that offers free sexual health advice and legal abortion services at sea, anchored in international waters off the coasts of countries where abortion is illegal. Proving that international waters can be as much a force for good as they are a go-to location for large scale narcotics exchanges and shitty boat raves.

Last Thursday, the boat was **due to arrive** in the port of Smir, Morocco – their first bid to reach women in a Muslim country – but, in response to the impending threat of lefty, feminist pirates calling for morally reprehensible options like the right to choose what happens to your own body, the Moroccan authorities shut down the entire port and sent armed warships to intercept.

Despite its illegal status, 600 to 800 backstreet abortions allegedly take place every day in Morocco. The unsterile conditions massively endanger the lives of the women who undergo the procedures, with over 90 dying every year, according to Gunilla Kleiverda, the gynaecologist aboard the *Women on Waves*. A safe option is available to Moroccan women: Misoprostol, which is available over the counter in Morocco under the name of Artotec, but nobody knows about it. Something *Women on Waves* hope to change.

The Moroccan police boarded the abortion boat last Thursday, refusing *Women on Waves* the right to have their lawyer present. In the midst of all that, after hours of frantic redialling, we finally got hold of Rebecca Gomperts, founder and director of the organisation, to find out what was happening. Before we were passed on to Rebecca, we spoke to another unnamed member of the team.

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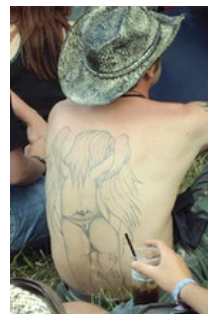
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VICE: What's going on in Morocco at the moment? Are you on the boat still?

Unnamed Source: No, we're on the deck at the port of Smir. We're still waiting to hear if our captains on board the boat are safe, but none of us are allowed to get on yet because the Moroccan police are searching it.

Are they allowed to do that in international waters?

Yeah, we sailed into the port so we're in Moroccan territory, and it's apparently legal for them to search any boat in the harbour without authorisation.

Have you had any trouble with protesters on land yet?

Yes. There were a lot of pro-life protestors gathered on land this morning, screaming at us when we went to hand out press releases. There were maybe 200 of them – probably 75 percent men, 25 percent women – and it got too scary so we had to leave. Rebecca is free to speak now, if you'd like to speak to her?

That would be great, thanks.



Hi, Rebecca. Tell us what's happening your end.

Rebecca Gomperts: OK, so the ship is in the harbour. The police are checking the boat, but we don't know what's going to happen, so we're staying alert and trying to make sure nothing bad happens to our captains on the ship.

What do you think might happen to them?

We don't know. There are some really aggressive policemen with them. I'm sorry, I need to be on standby for the ship now so I'm going to hang up. I'm sorry.

The Moroccan navy ended up escorting Women on Waves out of the harbour of Smir, but the organisation remain undeterred and have stated that the ship will remain in international waters near Morocco until they work out their next move. Despite the authorities' best efforts to silence Rebecca and her crew before they could properly spread their message to the people of Morocco, we're told the hotline advertised on their brief disembarkment to the shore had already been ringing off the hook.

Follow Rebecca Gomperts for breaking updates on the Women on Waves boat: [@rebeccagomperts](https://twitter.com/rebeccagomperts)

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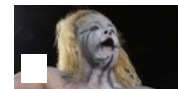
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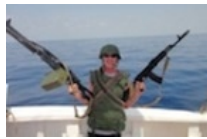
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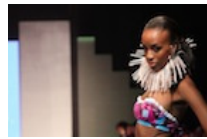
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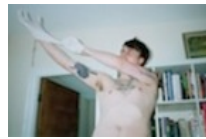
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