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Abortion pills handed over to police at Belfast pro-choice rally

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Pro-choice protesters outside Laganside Courts

Organisers of a pro-choice rally in Belfast have handed over abortion pills to the police.

At the demonstration, three women took what appeared to be abortion pills. A mini-robot that can be used to distribute abortion pills was also handed over to police.

The PSNI spoke to one of the women afterwards but she was not arrested.

A small anti-abortion protest also took place alongside the demonstration at Laganside Courts on Thursday.

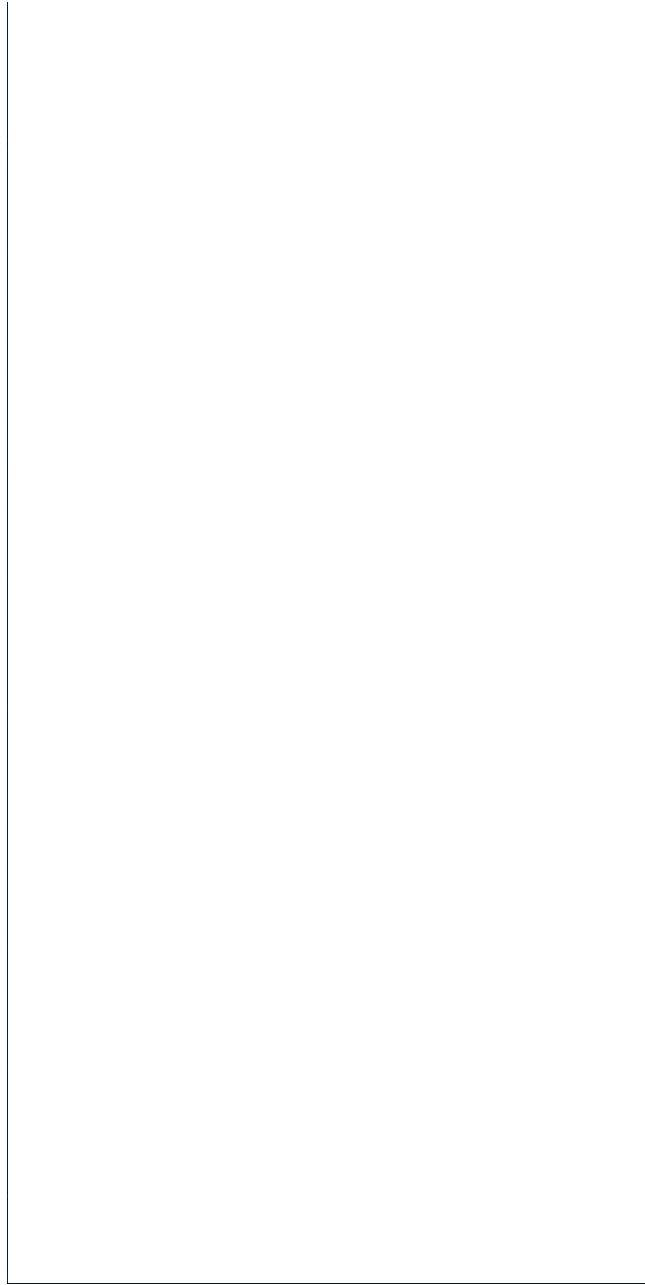


Abortion pills were handed over to police

'Seized'

A police inspector approached the organisers beforehand and warned them that if the robot was used to distribute the pills it could be seized.

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DUP politician Jim Wells and pro-life campaigner Bernie Smyth were among those who protested against changes to abortion laws in Northern Ireland

After 15 minutes of negotiations on the street outside Laganside Courts, a Dutch doctor, who was part of the protest, handed over the robots and the pills to the PSNI.

In Londonderry a group of pro-choice supporters held a rally at the Guildhall.

Pro-choice supporters dressed in 'The Handmaid's Tale' style outfits in Londonderry

On Tuesday, Irish Minister for Health Simon Harris sought the cabinet's backing to draft the new legislation.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar has said new abortion law will be in place by the end of the year.

The proposed legislation will allow abortions during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and up to the 24th week in exceptional circumstances.

- **Seismic shift for Ireland**
- **Timeline: Ireland and abortion**

Following the Republic's overwhelming vote in favour of abortion law reform, Northern Ireland will soon be the only part of either the UK or Ireland where abortion is illegal unless there is a serious risk to a woman's life or health.

Donegal was the only constituency to vote No

Unlike other parts of the UK, the 1967 Abortion Act does not extend to Northern Ireland.

And with the focus now shifted to Northern Ireland's strict abortion laws, with **UK Prime Minister Theresa May facing calls to act.**

But Mrs May is in a difficult situation because her administration depends on the support of **10 Democratic Unionist Party MPs** - who strongly oppose any reform.

Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald and deputy leader Michelle O'Neill are in favour of change, and attended the official abortion referendum result announcement at Dublin Castle last Saturday.

They held up a sign on stage, saying 'The north is next'.

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