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The Women on Waves ship Langenort took the organization's campaign to Poland in 2003.

October 4th, 2012

07:33 AM ET

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[Morocco using warships to block abortion vessel, group says](#)

The government of Morocco has closed the port of Smir and is blocking the harbor with warships to prevent the entry of a Dutch "abortion ship" to the Islamic country, the organization running the ship said Thursday.

Abortion is illegal in Morocco, and the country's Health Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that it had not authorized the vessel's visit or any procedures by nonresident doctors.

The abortion ship is run by Women on Waves, which was founded in 1999 by a Dutch doctor to provide abortions to women in countries where the practice is illegal. Their ship takes women into international waters to perform the abortions, which are legal under Dutch law, until 6.5 weeks into the pregnancy.

Gunilla Kleiverda, a Women on Waves gynecologist aboard the vessel, stressed that point in an interview with CNN on Thursday.

"I will not be practicing as a gynecologist in Morocco," Kleiverda said.

"We are not going to perform any abortions within Morocco. We are sailing out with women to international waters where in the international sea the Dutch law applies," she said.

Women on Waves also advocates the use of a drug called misoprostol, which it says is available legally in Morocco, to perform abortions up to 12 weeks after conception.

The group says it is establishing a phone hotline in Morocco for women to get information on how to perform the abortions at home.

Kleiverda said Moroccan women need access to safe abortions. About 90 women die from illegal abortions in the country every year, she said.

The ship has previously taken the campaign to Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Spain, but this is its first attempt to offer abortions in an Islamic country.

Women on Waves said on its website that it was looking into alternatives to get the ship into port in Morocco after the Smir harbor was blocked.

Post by: [CNN's Brad Lendon](#)

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