

N. Ireland woman who induced abortion given suspended prison term

🕒 Updated 1735 GMT (0035 HKT) April 5, 2016

Story highlights

Woman with suspended prison term ordered abortion-inducing drugs online

Anti-abortion group in Northern Ireland decries sentence as too lenient

Attorney says client would not have been charged anywhere else in the UK

the United Kingdom.

(CNN) — Had the woman lived anywhere else in the UK other than Northern Ireland, she would not have been prosecuted for inducing her own abortion, her attorney said.

But she lacked the money to travel to England at age 19. So she wound up in court in Northern Ireland, where she pleaded guilty to two charges, and, now at 21, she received a three-month suspended prison term Tuesday.

The judge, David McFarland, said he was unaware of anyone ever having been prosecuted under Northern Ireland's 150-year-old abortion law, such legislation having been "substantially amended" in the rest of

Debate over abortion flares in various countries

The woman cannot be named for legal reasons. She pleaded guilty to procuring her abortion by using a poison and to supplying a poison with intent to cause a miscarriage.

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The case comes amid controversies over abortion worldwide, including in the U.S. presidential race.

Notably, [Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gave a series of evolving answers](#) to the question of whether a woman who obtains an abortion should be punished. [He started with yes, but ended with no](#), saying that the woman, along with the fetus, is a victim in such a case.

And it comes, too, as Poland considers a complete ban on abortion, including in cases of rape or when the fetus has a severe health issue.

The idea hasn't been put into law, but Prime Minister Beata Szydlo and [Jarosław Kaczyński](#), the leader of the ruling Law and Justice Party, say they support it.

A letter from Catholic bishops promoting the ban was read in churches last Sunday, prompting mass protests across the nation.

Polish law currently allows the termination of a pregnancy only at an early stage and when it threatens the life or health of the mother, when the baby is likely to be permanently handicapped or when pregnancy originates from a crime such as rape or incest.

Housemates found fetus in the trash

The woman in Northern Ireland told her housemates she wanted to travel to England but could not raise enough money. She contacted an abortion clinic in England, which told her about two drugs available online that would induce an abortion.



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She bought the drugs, and the fetus -- a male of between 10 and 12 weeks' gestation -- was aborted. Her housemates found the fetus in the trash and contacted police.

A fetus of 12 weeks would be 2.13 inches long on average and would weigh about half an ounce, although there can be considerable variation, according to the babycentre.co.uk website, which cites various medical journals.

Anti-abortion group says law demands life sentence

The anti-abortion group [Precious Life](#) called Tuesday for an appeal of the sentence.



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The organization's director, Bernadette Smyth, said the judge had undermined an 1861 law calling for a

Home

Every woman, being with child, who, with intent to procure her own miscarriage shall unlawfully administer to herself any poison or other noxious thing ... shall be guilty of felony, and being convicted thereof shall be liable to be kept in penal servitude for life."

The organization said it was "very shocked" by the leniency of the judge's sentence and said it had set a dangerous precedent.

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CNN's Peter Taggart in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Antonia Mortensen contributed to this report.



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