

Calls for action in Northern Ireland as abortion referendum passes in Republic



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Members of the quartet Voices For Appeal wait at Dublin Castle for the result of the referendum (Niall Carson/PA)

By Michael Sheils McNamee

May 26 2018

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Political leaders have reacted to the Yes vote in the Republic's abortion referendum by calling for changes to legislation in Northern Ireland.

Voters in the Republic have backed repealing the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution by a margin of more than two-thirds.

Taoiseach hails 'resounding' abortion referendum victory

source: Federica De Caria



The result has prompted calls for a change of legislation in Northern Ireland by Alliance, the SDLP and Sinn Féin, although members of the DUP have come out in opposition to the result - in keeping with the party's pro-life position.



Sinn Féin

@sinnfeinireland

Indeed it is. [#together4yes](#) [#sf4yes](#)

6:09 PM - May 26, 2018 · Dublin City, Ireland

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On Twitter, North Antrim MP Ian Paisley wrote: "NI should not be bullied into accepting abortion on demand. NI did not have a constitutional imperative on abortion it is governed by laws that can be changed.

"The settled will of the people has been to afford protections to the unborn life and protect the life of the mother."

His party colleague Jim Wells wrote on the social media platform the result had been an "absolute tragedy" and in Northern Ireland "we must redouble our efforts to prevent this happening".

Many commentators and political leaders have said the focus will now shift to Northern Ireland, but noted the differences in changing legislation.

Speaking to the BBC on Saturday, Alliance Party leader Naomi Long said "all eyes will focus on Northern Ireland" and she did not think it was acceptable that "women are left behind the rest of these islands".

SDLP leader Colum Eastwood emphasised the need for the Northern Ireland Executive to be restored to deal with the issue.

- **Confirmed: Republic's abortion referendum passes - Yes, 66.4%, No 33.6%**

Earlier this month his party - which has traditionally taken a pro-life stance - supported allowing members to have a conscience vote on abortion matters.

"We must commend both sides for emphatically defending their conscience in this referendum, and acknowledge many people of goodwill and integrity on both sides of the debate," he said.

"There will be many across our nation today who will be unnerved and uncomfortable with this outcome. People of good intent who fought this referendum on the basis of their deeply held beliefs must be met with grace and our priority must now be bringing people back together.

"Today also comes as a stark reminder how distinctly unfair it is for the people here in the North who cannot legislate on any issue because they are being denied a government for reasons much less insurmountable than the one being overcome in the Republic today."

On Saturday afternoon, Sinn Fein's leader in Northern Ireland Michelle O'Neill appeared on stage at Dublin Castle, where supporters of the Yes vote have gathered for the official announcement.



michelle oneill
@moneillsf

A momentous day for the women of Ireland...the atmosphere here at Dublin Castle is electric as result is expected to be officially declared shortly @MaryLouMcDonald

5:32 PM - May 26, 2018

536 132 people are talking about this

"A momentous day for the women of Ireland...the atmosphere here at Dublin Castle is electric as result is expected to be officially declared shortly," she wrote Twitter, pictured alongside party leader Mary Lou McDonald.

Calls from the SDLP, Sinn Fein and the SDLP reflected a wider trend on Twitter of support for a rule change in Northern Ireland, with hashtag #TogetherForNI trending on Twitter.

Feminist pro-choice groups Rosa and Women on Web has announced it will bring a #Bus4Choice to Northern Ireland next week, with the purpose of flouting Northern Ireland's abortion laws.

The action will see abortion pills supplied remotely to women under medical supervision, and will start at the Belfast Laganside Courts on May 31, before making its way to the constituency offices of various prominent pro-life MLAs and MPs.

It will then head to Derry for a rally involving trade unionists and pro-choice activists.

Sir Vince Cable: UK has responsibility to reform Northern Ireland abortion laws
source: David Hughes



Belfast Telegraph Digital

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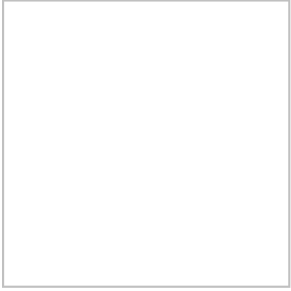
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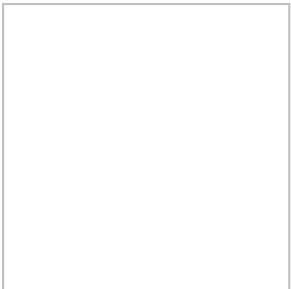
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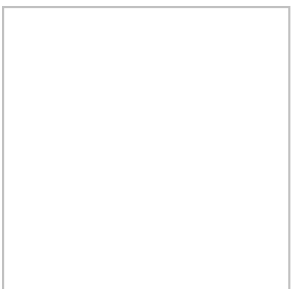
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