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Northern Irish court allows judicial review into decision to prosecute woman under abortion ban

Women in Northern Ireland face up to life in prison for having an abortion

Siobhan Fenton Social Affairs Correspondent | [@siobhanfenton](#) | 9 hours ago | [4 comments](#)



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A pro-choice protest in Belfast in April 2016 *Getty Images*

A Belfast court has granted leave for a judicial review into the decision of the public prosecution service to prosecute a woman under the abortion ban.

Unlike the rest of the UK, the 1967 Abortion Act does not apply in Northern Ireland. It is a criminal offence to have an abortion there, even if a woman conceives as a result of rape or incest, or in the event of fatal foetal abnormality.

A number of woman have faced prosecution for breaking the ban within the last year.

The court has granted leave to review a case in which a woman has been charged with helping her teenage daughter to access abortion pills in order to perform a termination.

The woman was arrested last year and is still awaiting trial.

In a statement, Grainne Teggart, Northern Ireland Campaign Manager of Amnesty International said: “We welcome the decision of the court to grant leave to challenge the decision to prosecute a mother for procuring abortion pills for her daughter – she is not a criminal, her daughter is not a criminal. Abortion is a healthcare and human rights issue and the law must stop treating Northern Ireland women who need abortions as criminals.

“It is wrong that the mother has been treated like a common criminal for attempting to help her daughter by sourcing medication, which is prescribed free on the NHS in every other part of the UK.

“This case highlights, yet again, that making abortion illegal does not stop women in Northern Ireland needing or seeking terminations. In the absence of a government and a legislature willing to deal with such matters, we once again look to the courts to remedy the wrongs created by our abortion laws.”

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In April of last year a 21-year-old woman was convicted of committing an abortion and given a suspended sentence. The court was told she performed an abortion on herself at home when she was 19 and her flat mates found out and reported her to the police.

In November 2015, the Belfast High Court found Northern Ireland's abortion ban is a breach of international human rights law.

However, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted against a proposal to relax the ban.

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Steve Hill

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Knuckle-dragging dinosaurs. It's another world up there.

It is shameful that part of the UK behaves in this way. The politicians in NI all make a living out of trying to "out-God" each other, while basic human rights are trampled underfoot.

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somerset sage

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one case where a referendum might tell us if the legislators actually represent the views of the people.

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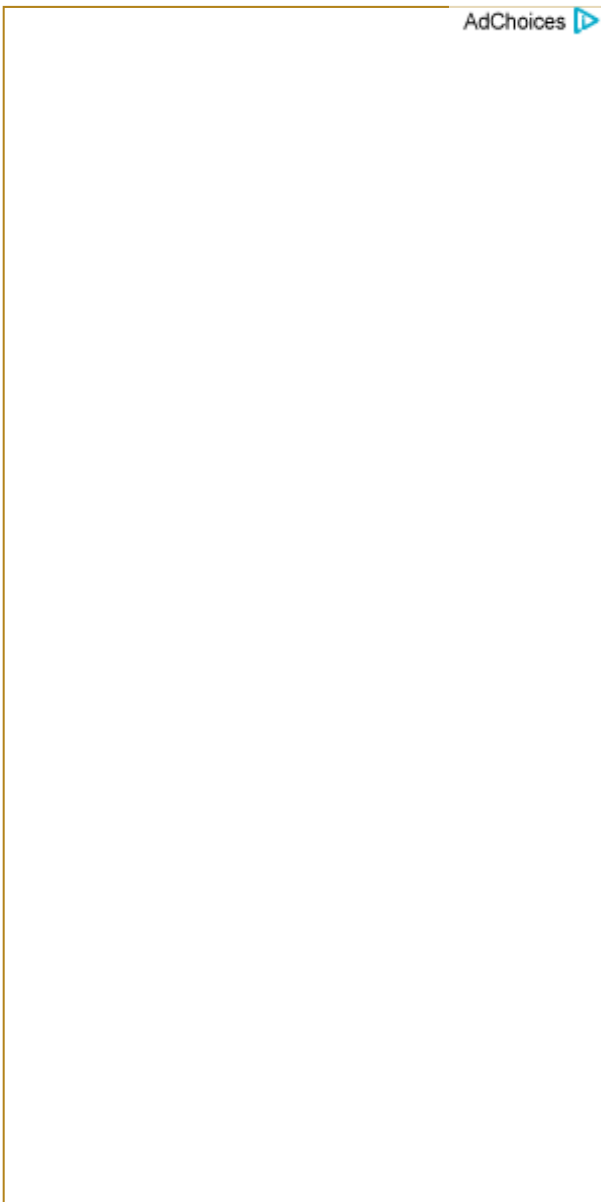
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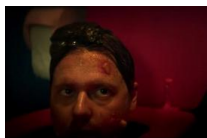
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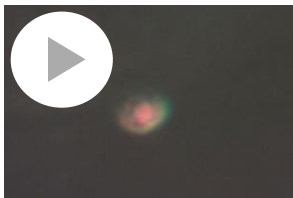
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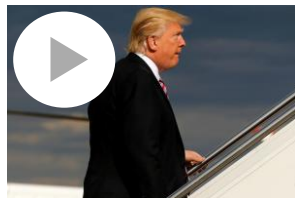
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