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Abortion robots confiscated by police for distributing pills at Belfast protest

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Posted By Melissa Pelts on May 31, 2018



Women swallow abortion pills at pro-choice Belfast protest

Protest action saw banned pills delivered by robots remotely controlled from the Netherlands to avoid laws on assisting abortion



Pro-choice campaigners have taken illegal abortion pills outside Northern Ireland's main court buildings in defiance of the strict laws governing terminations.

“The main purpose is to prove that the law here is unworkable,” Cerys Falbey, a ROSA activist told BuzzFeed News. The pills were delivered to protesters by a robot supplied by Women on Waves, a charitable organisation who along with Women on Web deliver abortion pills to women in countries where they are not available legally. Since last year, women from Northern Ireland have been able to access NHS abortion services in England free of charge, although many are thought to order abortion pills online in order to avoid expensive travel costs, and so that they can carry out the procedure at home.” Women in Northern Ireland are accessing abortion pills online every single day,” Falbey continued.

A number of people gathered outside the court to protest against the lack of access to

abortion rights in Northern Ireland.

Police had warned that pregnant women who take the abortion pills delivered by a pro-choice organisations abortion robot could face charges.

On Saturday, abortion rights campaigners will march in solidarity with LGBT campaigners at the March for Equality in Belfast. Same-sex marriage is also prohibited in Northern Ireland, despite being legal in the rest of the UK, and both groups are pushing for change on both issues.”This is just the start of it,” Falbey added. “Were not planning on backing down and this isnt a one off.”

The robot was part of the Bus4Choice run by social feminist organisation Rosa NI with the support of web-based abortion pills provider Women on Web and Women on Waves.

Three women, who wish to remain anonymous for legal reasons, took the drug mifepristone, which is used in early medical abortion, outside Belfast Laganside Court on Thursday as part of a demonstration organised by abortion rights group ROSA (Reproductive Rights Against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity).Taking abortion pills in Northern Ireland can carry a jail sentence of up to 14 years.

The women, who would not disclose their identity or whether they were pregnant, had intended to challenge the law by taking the pills outside the courthouse.

“We demand that action is taken now. The politicians cannot be allowed to deliver for the women of Northern Ireland anything less than what exists for women and pregnant people in England, Scotland and Wales. Despite the outdated language and serious limitations, we demand that the already existing legislation in Britain – the 1967 Abortion Act – is immediately extended to Northern Ireland.

A doctor was intending to counsel women remotely, as the robots were operated from

the Netherlands in a bid to avoid breaking the law.

“People feel that, once again, Northern Ireland is being left behind, but a similar mood was also widespread in the South in the years prior to the referendum. For years, the political establishment were unified in their opposition to the right to choose. It took a movement of women, young people, LGBTQ+ people and working-class communities to drag Southern society into the 21st century.”

On Wednesday PSNI detective chief superintendent Tim Mairs said it would investigate any suspected criminal offences.

“The actions of ROSA and Women on Web – including the Abortion Pill Train, the #Bus4Repeal and the Abortion Drone – were key in this regard. Im very happy now to be supporting todays action, which builds on that work. These acts of civil disobedience supplied pregnant people with safe but illegal abortion pills, but they were also instrumental in shifting the debate on abortion.

Organisers of pro-Choice rally in Belfast have handed over abortion pills & mini-robot to police. Demonstrators had planned to take pills in public. Police approached organisers beforehand & warned them that if the robot was used to distribute the pills it could be seized. pic.twitter.com/Af6liBig0l

Northern Ireland is the only region in these islands and one of the few pockets of Europe to deny abortion rights. Theresa Mays praise for the referendum result and her ridiculous claims that she is a feminist are nothing but empty words and utter hypocrisy, since she is not prepared to take action to extend abortion rights immediately to Northern Ireland.

Eleanor Crossey Malone, from socialist feminist movement Rosa, was one of those who took the pill in front of television cameras.

She said: “I have taken this in defiance of the extremely outdated, medieval, anti-choice laws that exist in Northern Ireland.

“Northern Ireland after repeal will be one of only two jurisdictions remaining in Europe to criminalise women effectively for having abortions.

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