

The global post-clinic abortion

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calls from the press and emails from hundreds of Irish women seeking appointments. The onslaught of interest took them by surprise. So did a controversy that was starting to brew back home. Conservative politicians in the Netherlands denounced Ms. Gomperts for potentially breaking a law that required a special license for any doctor to provide an abortion after six and a half weeks of pregnancy. Ms. Gomperts had applied for it a few months earlier and received no reply. She set sail anyway, planning to perform abortions only up to six and a half weeks if the license did not come through.

When Ms. Gomperts's ship docked in Dublin, she still didn't have the license. Irish women's groups were divided over what to do. Ms. Gomperts decided she couldn't go ahead without their united support and told a group of reporters and protesters that she wouldn't be able to give out a single pill. "This is just the first of many trips that we plan to make," she said from the shore, a scene that is captured in "Vessel," a documentary about her work that will be released this winter. Ms. Gomperts was accused of misleading women. A headline in The Telegraph read: "Abortion Boat Admits Dublin Voyage Was a Publicity Sham."

Ms. Gomperts set sail again two years later, this time resolving to perform abortions only up to six and a half weeks. She went to Poland first and to Portugal in 2004. The Portuguese minister of defense sent two warships to stop the boat, then just 12 miles offshore

