

# Irish politician to take abortion pill from Belfast in pro-choice demonstration

28 October 2014

An Irish politician has boarded the train to Belfast to get an abortion pill that she will take in defiance of the Republic's ban.

Socialist TD Ruth Coppinger, along with 30 other pro-choice activists, collected tablets in Northern Ireland on Tuesday after boarding the 'abortion pill train'.

The women were recreating the landmark contraceptive train of the 1970s, when a group of feminists travelled on the Enterprise express train to Belfast to buy condoms and challenged the Irish state to arrest them.

Today they took the abortion pills - tablets ordered online which cause a non-surgical termination - to a rally in Dublin, with Ms Coppinger maintaining they are safer than driving or taking Viagra.

Organisers said the trip, held to mark the second anniversary of the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar, will show there is 'a safe, non-surgical abortion pill' available and to defy Ireland's "medieval abortion laws which criminalise women".

Women who are raped and those whose babies will be stillborn are not entitled in law to have abortions in Irish hospitals.

Ms Coppinger said the political establishment are way behind ordinary people when it comes to abortion.



Rita Harrold of Pro Choice group Rosa.ie pictured at Belfast Central Station as pro-choice activists re-created the contraceptive train of the 1970s

“They continue to give Catholic beliefs centrality when a large majority now favour allowing abortion to protect women's health, both physical and mental,” she said.

“How can politicians justify maintaining a Constitutional Amendment now 31-years-old and on which no woman of child-bearing age had a say?

“This action must be the first of many more to force this government to hold a Referendum to scrap the dangerous 8th Amendment.”

Abortion pills being bought online and on the black market are posing a serious health risk, particularly to teens and women who are hard hit financially and may be willing to risk their health without proper medical supervision.

More than 1,000 of the tablets have been seized in Ireland this year, mostly as they arrived into the country via mail order.

Medics say Ireland's anti-abortion laws are forcing women to order high-risk pills on the internet in a bid to end unwanted pregnancies.

Rita Harrold of ROSA (Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism & Austerity) said thousands of women in Ireland are forced to make a difficult and expensive journey to abortion clinics in England.

“Yet, a safe, less costly option could be provided through medical abortion pills prescribed by our own GPs, as happens in many other countries,” she said.

“Women had to break the law in the 1970s in the fight for basic healthcare in the form of contraception. A lifetime has passed for some of us since the X-case (the landmark case that established the right to abortion if a pregnant woman's life was at risk), it's two years on from Savita's tragic death and still someone as vulnerable as Miss Y (a suicidal woman who unsuccessfully sought to have an abortion), who could have safely and simply had an early medical abortion, is brutalised by the 8th amendment.”



Rita Harrold of pro-choice group Rosa.ie pictured at Belfast Central Station

Members of several pro-choice groups including ROSA, Action for Choice and Real Productive Health were joined by TDs and councillors from People Before Profit, Socialist Party and Anti Austerity Alliance.

However pro-life groups criticised the train trip.

“This appears to be an initiative more concerned with garnering publicity for the pro-choice cause rather than a genuine regard for women's health and wellbeing,” Caroline Simons of the Pro Life Campaign.

“The groups involved have no regard for the humanity of the unborn child and no interest in drawing attention to the fact that abortion has significant negative mental health consequences for many women.”

But Sinéad Kennedy, of Action for Choice, said the action is about highlighting how organisations can provide women living in Ireland with access to safe abortion.

“Control of one’s fertility, through access to safe abortion, is an integral part of a woman’s right to health and equality,” she added.

“Women living in Ireland must be entitled to make decisions about their own bodies and their own futures. Anything less than access to free, and safe abortion in Ireland is a violation of the fundamentals of what it is to be a human being.”

A candle light vigil and silence will later be held in memory of the Indian dentist Savita, who died from septicaemia after she was refused a termination.

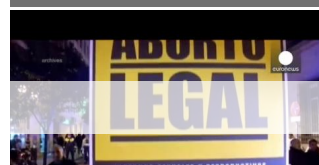
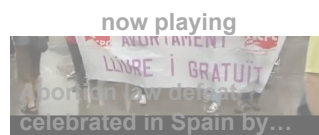


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### 3 comments



**Artemis13**

3 hours ago

The pills cannot be bought in Belfast. The activists have stated that they were ordered online from Women on Web and delivered to addresses in NI. They are not available for purchase in Northern Ireland. Please correct your article.

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**ribtickler**

3 hours ago

**@Artemis13** this form of emergency contraception is most certainly available from a pharmacy local to me, it is no secret.

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**Artemis13**

3 hours ago

**@ribtickler @Artemis13** No this is not emergency contraception. This is to be taken when up to 9 weeks pregnant. Emergency contraception stops implantation of fertilised egg. These are packs of Mifepristone and Misoprostal. While legal and prescribed for use other than to procure an abortion, and approved by WHO and on UN necessary medication list, they are not legal in NI or ROI to purchase for purposes of abortion. info below from <http://janet.ie/facts-about-the-abortion-pills-mifepristone-and-misoprostol/>

Mifepristone blocks the pregnancy hormones, they are only prescribed and dispensed in maternity hospitals and units around the country and are taken under direct supervision, a nurse will watch you take them.

Misoprostol are prescribed for a range of medical conditions and are known under several names Cytotec being one of the most common. Most Pharmacies stock them but they can not legally be prescribed to end a pregnancy. They cause the womb to contract and to eventually expell it's contents. Misoprostol can be used on it's own to end a pregnancy but the doses are greater and it's not as efficient as using them with Mifepristone.

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