

S. Korea court upholds abortion punishment

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South Korea's top court Thursday struck down a challenge calling for an end to tough legal punishments for midwives and others administering illegal abortions.

Abortion is outlawed in South Korea, except in cases where the procedure takes place before the 24th week of pregnancy and the mother's health is in danger, the [foetus](#) is malformed or the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

A midwife filed a petition against a clause of the law stipulating a maximum two-year jail term for doctors, [midwives](#), [traditional medicine](#) doctors, or pharmacists who perform an illegal abortion.

She challenged the law's constitutionality after going on trial for helping a woman terminate her pregnancy in 2010.

The constitutional court, however, dismissed the petition saying lighter punishment would only make abortion more rampant.

Official data showed that more than 340,000 abortions were conducted in 2005, 95 percent of them illegally. No later figures were available.

Abortion has for decades been widely tolerated by successive governments trying to control birth in a crowded society.

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