

Irish lawmakers debate abortion law for second day

July 11 2013

Irish lawmakers will resume discussion on controversial new abortion legislation later Thursday after failing to go to a final vote despite debating into the early hours.

The new bill will allow for abortion in limited cases where the mother's life is at risk, and is expected to pass as the [coalition government](#) enjoys a large majority and the support of some opposition.

But the divisions over the issue in the predominantly Catholic country were evident as lawmakers only debated a fraction of the 165 amendments tabled despite a marathon sitting lasting until 5:00 am (0400 GMT) Thursday.

Following the death of 31-year-old Indian woman Savita Halappanavar in a Galway hospital last October, Ireland's strict [abortion laws](#) have been the topic of intense debate at home and abroad.

Halappanavar had sought a termination when told she was miscarrying, but the request was refused as her life was not at risk at the time. She later died of sepsis days after miscarrying.

Prime Minister Enda Kenny has said he wants the new law passed promptly.

The bill follows a 2010 European Court of Human Rights ruling that found Ireland failed to properly implement the [constitutional right](#) to

abortion where a woman's life is at risk.

Under a 1992 Supreme Court ruling, women in Ireland are legally entitled to an abortion if needed to save a mother's life—but six successive governments have failed to introduce legislation to reflect this.

The new Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill allows for abortion in circumstances where doctors certify there is a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother, as opposed to a risk to her health.

The new bill also permits a termination when one [obstetrician](#) and two psychiatrists unanimously agree that an expectant mother is a [suicide risk](#).

The "suicide clause," in particular, has divided society, with some lawmakers sharing the view it will lead to a more liberal abortion regime in Ireland.

Kenny has not allowed a free vote on the matter with four government lawmakers expelled from the parliamentary party after voting against the bill at an earlier stage.

Much of the attention now is heaped on junior minister and member of Kenny's Fine Gael party, Lucinda Creighton, who has indicated she will not vote with the government and will therefore lose the party whip and her ministerial position.

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