

# Chile's Bachelet sends abortion bill to Congress

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Chile's President Michelle Bachelet on Saturday pressed ahead with plans to decriminalize abortion in certain cases, a decades-old taboo in one of Latin America's most socially conservative countries.

Bachelet's office has sent a bill to Congress which will allow abortion in cases of rape, risk to the mother or deadly birth defects.

Since the final days of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship, abortion of any type has been strictly outlawed in Chile.

Having an abortion is currently punishable by up to five years in prison. Bachelet, in introducing her bill, said in a statement that it is time for that to change.

"Facts have shown that the absolute prohibition and criminalization of abortion has not stopped the practice," said Bachelet, a physician who returned to office last March after serving as Chile's first woman president from 2006 to 2010.

She added that currently abortions "often take place in conditions that pose great risks to the life and health of women."

Polls show that about 70 percent of Chileans support Bachelet's bill.

Lawmakers from Bachelet's Socialist party have tried in the past to introduce abortion bills, but they have always been voted down by the

legislature.

Pinochet outlawed all abortion in 1989, as one of the final acts of his 17-year rule.

Prior to that, for more than 50 years, Chile permitted [abortion](#) if the mother's life was in danger or if the fetus was not viable.

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