

UK doctors' union calls for change in abortion law

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The British Medical Association, which represents the country's doctors, said Tuesday abortions should not be a criminal offense and called for them to be regulated in the same way as other health procedures.

An 1861 law made [abortion](#) a criminal act. The 1967 Abortion Act provided exceptions—terminations are now legal in much of Britain up to 24 weeks of pregnancy, provided two doctors sign off on them and they take place on approved premises—but abortions that are not carried out according to that bill's conditions are criminal offenses. There is no time limit for high-risk cases.

Hundreds of [doctors](#) at the BMA's annual conference voted Tuesday to back changing the law.

Dr. John Chisholm, who chairs the body's medical ethics committee, said there was heated debate but most members "were clear that abortion should be treated as a medical issue rather than a criminal one."

The BMA said decriminalization did not mean deregulation, and that abortion providers would still be regulated.

Pro-life activists protested outside the meeting and said the decision had brought the medical profession "into disrepute."

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