

# Chile court rules in favor of abortion in some cases

August 21 2017, by Eva Vergara

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Pro and anti - abortion demonstrators shout slogans outside the Constitutional Court building in Santiago, Chile, Aug. 18, 2017. The court is to decide on a law that legalizes abortion in limited circumstances and end the socially conservative country's status as the last in South America with a blanket ban on the procedure. (AP Photo/Esteban Felix)

Chile's Constitutional Court on Monday upheld a measure that would end the country's absolute ban on abortions.

The court's 6-4 vote accepted the constitutionality of a measure to legalize abortions when a woman's life is in danger, when a fetus is not viable and in cases of rape. President Michelle Bachelet has said she will sign the measure that passed Congress this month. It will end Chile's stance as the last country in South America to ban abortion in all cases.

"Today, women have won, democracy has won, all of Chile has won," said Bachelet, a physician and former head of U.N. Women.

Court secretary Rodrigo Pica said details of the decision, which cannot be appealed, would be released on Aug. 28. Demonstrators in favor of therapeutic abortion celebrated outside the courtroom in the Chilean capital, while opponents protested, including two women carrying anti-abortion banners who embraced in tears after the decision was announced.

Conservative lawmakers had filed an appeal with the court to halt the law, arguing it was unconstitutional.

The Chilean reproductive rights organization Mises hailed the court's decision as a "historic moment that marks a before and after for Chilean women."



An anti-abortion demonstrator holds a sign that reads in Spanish "It is written: you will not kill" outside the Constitutional Court building in Santiago, Chile, Aug. 18, 2017. The court is to decide on a law that legalizes abortion in limited circumstances and end the socially conservative country's status as the last in South America with a blanket ban on the procedure. (AP Photo/Esteban Felix)

Chile legalized abortion for medical reasons in 1931, but the procedure was then banned under all circumstances in 1989 during the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Women found guilty of having abortions now face prison terms of up to five years. Still, thousands of illegal abortions are performed every year. Most involve black-market purchases of the drug misoprostol to end first-trimester pregnancies.

Those who can afford to sometimes seek abortions in neighboring Argentina or beyond.



Pro-abortion demonstrators shout slogans outside the Constitutional Court building in Santiago, Chile, Aug. 18, 2017. The court is to decide on a law that legalizes abortion in limited circumstances and end the socially conservative country's status as the last in South America with a blanket ban on the procedure. (AP Photo/Esteban Felix)

"Chile has finally moved one step closer to protecting the human rights of women and girls," said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

"This victory is testament to the work of millions of women across the Americas and the world who fight against draconian laws that punish women and push them to seeking clandestine and dangerous abortions, putting their health and lives at risk."



The bill's passage comes as views continue to shift on social issues once considered taboo in the heavily Roman Catholic nation that only began to allow divorce in 2004. Congress recognized civil unions for same-sex couples in 2015.

Chile is one of four countries that currently prohibit abortion in all cases, according to the New York-based Center for Reproductive Rights, though a few others have rules so restrictive that they amount to de facto bans.



A woman holds a sign with the photo of a woman that was disappeared during the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, next to anti-abortion demonstrators protesting outside the Constitutional Court building in Santiago, Chile, Aug. 18, 2017. The court is to decide on a law that legalizes abortion in limited circumstances and end the socially conservative country's status as the last in South America with a blanket ban on the procedure. (AP Photo/Esteban Felix)

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Citation: Chile court rules in favor of abortion in some cases (2017, August 21) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-08-chile-court-favor-abortion-cases.html>

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