

# Argentina president urges Congress to start abortion debate

March 1 2018, by Luis Andres Henao

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Argentina's President Mauricio Macri waves as he arrives to open the 2018 session of Congress and give the annual State of the Nation address, flanked by Emilio Monzo, president of the Chamber of Deputies, left, and Vice President Gabriela Michetti, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, March 1, 2018. (AP Photo/Pablo Stefanec)

Argentina's conservative President Mauricio Macri said Thursday that Congress should launch a debate on broader legalization of abortion,

though he said he opposes it.

Macri told lawmakers that he favors "mature, responsible debates," and his government believes that Congress should include the issue in its 2018 agenda.

"I hope all voices are heard and are taken into consideration," Macri said during his annual state of the nation speech to Congress.

Abortion is only allowed in Argentina in cases of rape and health risks to the woman. But woman's health advocates say that politicians, doctors and judges often continue to block therapeutic abortions despite a 2012 Supreme Court ruling that was supposed to remove barriers to abortion and take judges out of such decisions.

The health ministry estimates that between 370,000 and 522,000 Argentine women undergo illegal abortions each year.

Thousands of people recently gathered at a demonstration by pro-[abortion](#) activists in front of the Congress building in Buenos Aires to demand free and safe abortions.

Opposition party lawmakers say they will soon present a bill to legalize abortions in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. The measure is expected to face stiff resistance from lawmakers in both houses of Congress.



Argentina's President Mauricio Macri, left, gives the annual State of the Nation address at Congress next to Vice President Gabriela Michetti, right, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, March 1, 2018. (AP Photo/Pablo Stefanec)

Elective abortions are prohibited in most of Latin America. Cuba allows abortions in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy and Uruguay permits the procedure in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Several nations allow abortions in cases of rape or danger to a woman's life, and four ban it altogether.



Argentina's President Mauricio Macri delivers his annual State of the Nation address at Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, March 1, 2018. Pictured left is next Emilio Monzo, president of the Chamber of Deputies. (AP Photo/Pablo Stefanec)

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