

Abortion rights around the world

June 14 2018

Abortion, which Argentine lawmakers on Thursday voted to legalise, is banned in some 20 countries worldwide, while others have highly restrictive laws in place.

Here is a snapshot of the global situation:

Total ban

Predominantly Catholic Malta is the only European Union country to totally ban [abortion](#), imposing jail terms of between 18 months and three years if the law is broken.

Abortion is also banned in Andorra, the Vatican and San Marino, which are in Europe but not the EU.

Globally there are total bans in Congo-Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Laos, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Philippines, Palau, Senegal and Suriname.

In El Salvador the internationally criticised criminalisation of those found to have terminated pregnancies has led to women being sentenced to jail terms of up to 30 years.

Restricted

Many countries allow abortions in cases where the mother's life is

deemed to be in danger.

A partial list includes: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Myanmar, Paraguay, South Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Venezuela, West Bank/Gaza and Yemen.

In Argentina abortion is currently illegal except in cases of rape or when the life or health of the woman is at risk.

Legislation that will decriminalize it during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, and beyond that in cases where the foetus suffers from conditions not compatible with life outside the womb, will now go before the Senate.

In Brazil the law only allows terminations in cases of rape, risk to the life of the mother or if the foetus is missing part or all of the brain.

Last September Chile lifted a strict ban, which had been in force for decades, when then president Michelle Bachelet signed into law legislation to decriminalise abortion in certain cases, including on health issues.

On May 22 a decades-old abortion ban went to South Korea's [supreme court](#).

Pressure for change

Women from Europe and North America benefit from the most liberal legislation, with some notable exceptions.

Unlike the rest of the United Kingdom, abortion is also illegal in the province of Northern Ireland except when the mother's life is in danger.

On June 7 Britain's Supreme Court said it would have declared Northern Ireland's [abortion laws](#) incompatible with human rights legislation if not for a procedural technicality in what pro-choice campaigners hailed as a victory.

In late May, more than 66 percent of voters in traditionally Catholic Ireland voted by a landslide to ditch its strict abortion laws, where abortion is only allowed if a mother's life is at risk, in a referendum. New legislation is now being drawn up.

In EU member Poland, which has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the bloc, a new bill submitted by ultra-conservatives would restrict abortion even further. The bill unleashed mass demonstrations across the country.

In the United States abortion was legalised nationwide in 1973, but this has been under pressure since Donald Trump became president, with some Republicans seeking restrictions.

The US state of Iowa in early May signed into law a ban on abortions once a foetal heartbeat is detected, which occurs as early as six weeks into a pregnancy. The Midwestern state now has the strictest legislation on abortion in the US.

(Sources: Guttmacher Institute, World Health Organization, Center for Reproductive Rights, AFP)

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Citation: Abortion rights around the world (2018, June 14) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-06-abortion-rights-world.html>

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