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Dublin protests in solidarity with the Belfast mother charged with supplying the abortion pill to her daughter

Andrew Flood

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A couple of hundred people came to the pro choice solidarity rally in Dublin, Ireland last night organised by the WSMt. It was called to protest against the prosecution of a woman in Belfast for supplying her daughter with the abortion pill.

Banners reading Drop The Charges and Free Safe Legal Abortion had been prepared the previous evening for the protest which had been called by the Workers Solidarity Movement and (Re)al-Productive Health. There were speakers from both these organisations but also from the Abortion Rights Campaign and ROSA whose banners were also brought to the protest.

The prosecution is taking place in northern Ireland where 200 pro-choice activists have signed a letter admitting to breaking the same law and demanding that the charges be dropped or they also be prosecuted. The Dublin rally was timed to co-

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incide with the Belfast protest outside Musgrave Police Station also at 6pm. At the same time in Galway pro-choice activists were blocking the Wolfe Tone bridge to also demand the dropping of the charges.

At the end of the rally other pro-choice campaigners attempted to drop a 3rd banner from the roof of the GPO reading 'Abortion Charges Are Bollox' but in a massive Garda over reaction one of them was thrown to the ground and pepper sprayed, a second had the clothes torn off his upper body and both of these along with a third person were then arrested. We have covered this in more details in previous posts to this page and immediately afterwards released a statement condemning the Garda attack on pro-choice campaigners. All three have now been released.

The abortion 'pill' – Mifepristone and Misoprostol, both which are used successfully worldwide to induce miscarriages during the first nine weeks of pregnancy – is also illegal in almost all circumstances in the south. The Labour Party / Fine Gael government brought in a law in 2013 under which a woman who obtained an abortion could be jailed for 14 years, as could anyone aiding here. But the reality is hundreds of people a year are using these pills for abortion in Ireland. Will the Garda continue to turn a blind eye or will we see an attempted prosecution in the south similar to the north.

It is not acceptable as Aoife from Re(al) Productive Health pointed out during the rally that women have to hunt down essential medical information about where to obtain pills from the backs of toilet doors in pubs. Or that they have to worry that the medication might be seized, the post be delayed or worse yet that they be criminalised. (Video of some of the speeches to be posted later).

Advances in medical technology and the development of safe medical abortion that people can self-administer when the state gives them no other choice means the current law is unworkable. There has to be a new referendum to remove

the anti-choice 8th Amendment to the constitution which equates the life of a mother to the foetus she carries. Access to abortion should not be a political issue but a medical one for the person concerned to decide on.

Access to abortion should be free, safe and legal.