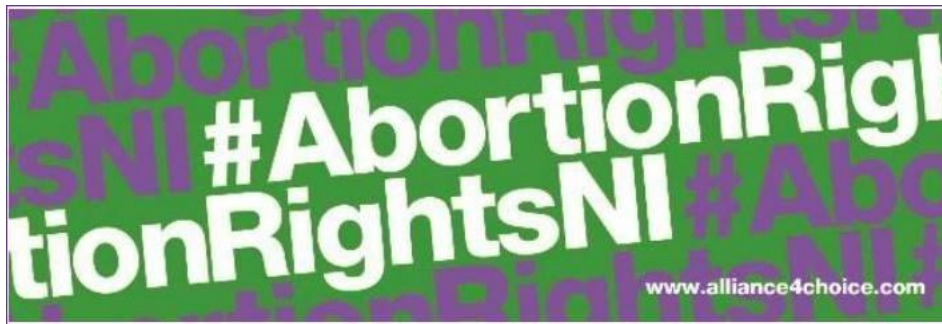


NORTHERN IRELAND



At midnight on 21 October 2019, in Northern Ireland, Sections 58 & 59 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861 were repealed. This law had barred thousands upon thousands of women and pregnant people from accessing abortions at home and with dignity. Alliance for Choice NI put out a press release with quotes from some of the supporters of the gargantuan effort to make this a reality, which has lasted for several decades. Here are some of those quotes:

“Even before new provisions and regulations are in place in March 2020, we have now removed the most dangerous barrier for those needing to access abortion pills online and medics wanting to give information and aftercare, the threat of prosecution.”

- Emma Campbell, Co-Convenor of Alliance for Choice Belfast

“In 2014 when I needed an abortion and was denied one I swore I would add my voice to the campaign for abortion rights and to have achieved that is just incredible. This will never undo my experience but has given a purpose to my pain and I am relieved that no one will now have to go through what I did.”

- Ashleigh Topley from Portadown, who faced the refusal of abortion treatment, subsequent court cases right up to the Supreme Court and who now organises the In Her Shoes NI pages online

“For too long, women and girls in Northern Ireland have been left behind their counterparts in the rest of the UK when it comes to their human rights. Today, women can know that their houses will not be raided for abortion pills, they will not be reported to the police if they seek aftercare at the doctor’s, and they will not be dragged through the courts and threatened with prison just for accessing basic healthcare. Removing the threat of prosecution is just the first step in achieving free, safe, legal and local abortion in Northern Ireland. The fight must now continue to ensure that the regulations due to come into force on 31st March are in place so that no woman has to travel to get the healthcare she needs”

- Stella Creasy, MP who tabled the most recent bill, the Executive Formation Bill Amendment, in the UK Parliament, that has now delivered abortion rights to Northern Ireland from 22 October 2019

“Today the women of Northern Ireland are finally free. Free to choose if, when and how many children they want to have. No more will the state reduce women’s value to their breeding potential. We are equal citizens. We will be shamed no more.”

- Dawn Purvis, long-standing campaigner on abortion & LGBT+ rights in NI and ex-director of Marie Stopes Belfast

In anticipation that the bill would become law, on 8 October, the Northern Ireland government published [Guidance for Healthcare Professionals on Abortion Law in Northern Ireland](#), which is intended to be in effect until 31 March 2020. The guidance states that no criminal charges can be brought against those who have an abortion, or against healthcare professionals who provide and assist in an abortion. The government has made arrangements to support women resident in

Northern Ireland wishing to access services in Britain under the existing travel scheme. In the interim period, abortions in cases of "fatal or serious fetal anomaly" may be carried out.

SOURCES: Northern Ireland Alliance for Choice [press release](#), 21 October 2019 ; [BBC](#), 8 October 2019

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