



Police pull abortion pill robots from Belfast streets

By REUTERS

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By Serena Chaudhry

LONDON, May 31 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Robots deployed on the streets of Belfast to deliver abortion pills in an awareness-raising exercise were impounded by police on Thursday, as pressure mounts for Northern Ireland's strict pregnancy termination laws to be liberalised.

Rights groups Rosa and Women on Waves used two robots to deliver the pills to women outside a court in the city, as they press their demands for reform after neighbouring Ireland voted last week to liberalise its laws.

Women on Waves founder Rebecca Gomperts said police had removed the robots, which were controlled from the Netherlands to show that the pills could be delivered to women in Northern Ireland seeking abortion without breaking the law.

"The momentum is now there for Northern Ireland to make a change," Gomperts told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The fact that abortion is not allowed here in Northern Ireland is violating women's rights."

Belfast police confirmed they had seized two small robots and were investigating the incident to see if any offences had been committed.

Gomperts said three women had swallowed abortion pills but it was unclear if they were pregnant.

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The elected assembly has the right to bring its abortion laws in line with the rest of the United Kingdom, but voted against doing so in February 2016. The assembly has not sat since the devolved government collapsed in January 2017.

(Reporting by Serena Chaudhry, Editing by Claire Cozens. Please credit Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking, property rights, climate change and resilience. Visit news.trust.org)

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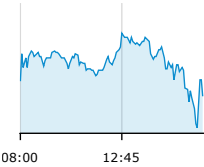
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