

Irish Bid to Outlaw Private Abortion Clinics Blocked

An attempt to stop private clinics carrying out abortions in Northern Ireland was blocked last week—even though it won majority support. It was vetoed at the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Sinn Féin Party and two MLAs from the Alliance Party and the Green Party.

The proposal was a response to Marie Stopes International controversially opening the first private abortion clinic in Belfast. It would have meant abortions could only be carried out in NHS clinics, not private ones.

Unlike the rest of the UK, **abortion** is only legal in Northern Ireland to save the life of a mother. Critics say the opening of the Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast is an attempt to push for more liberal abortion laws. But the clinic says it would only operate within the law of Northern Ireland.

During a heated debate in Stormont, MLAs criticized the block. DUP MLA Paul Givan said, “We should be as one on the point that the NHS is where vulnerable women and their unborn children should be cared for, not a private clinic making financial gain.”

He added that the amendment does not change the grounds upon which abortion can be carried out, but prevents them taking place in “unregulated, unaccountable private clinics.”

SDLP MLA Patsy McGlone argued: “The **pro-abortion** lobby is keen to push the boundaries of the law on the issue. Many suspect that that is the motivation behind the sudden appearance of a Marie Stopes International clinic.”