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## **Argentina lawmakers in marathon abortion debate**

***Lawmakers in Argentina spent Wednesday afternoon and the entire night debating whether to allow women to have abortions in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.***

BBC (14.06.2018) - <https://bbc.in/2MrAvoU> - A vote on a draft bill is due to be held in the lower house later on Thursday.

Deputies have been split almost evenly in the highly divisive debate and the result could go either way.

If approved, the bill will still have to go to the Senate.

President Mauricio Macri is strongly opposed to the bill but has said that he would not veto it if it was passed by Congress.

Abortion is currently illegal in Argentina, except in cases of rape or when the life or health of the woman is at risk. Women seeking abortions also have to apply to a judge for permission, which critics say can unnecessarily delay the procedure.

### ***Divided, but not along party lines***

Lawmakers for and against the bill had five minutes each to outline their position and try to sway deputies from the other side.

President Macri had told members of his party to vote according to their conscience.

The debate was rare in Argentine politics in that it was not divided along party lines, but that there were opponents and supporters both on the left and the right.

Before the session started at 11:30 local time on Wednesday (14:30 GMT), more than a dozen lawmakers had said that they were still undecided.

It is these that the lawmakers speaking are trying to convince. More than 200 took to the podium in the first 19 hours of the debate.

Axel Kicillof of the Justicialist Party urged his colleagues to "give women the right to decide over their bodies".

But Mario Horacio Arce of the Radical Civic Union argued that the bill would be unconstitutional.

"The national constitution does not distinguish between different phases of pregnancy, it protects life from the moment of conception," he said.

Silvia Martínez, also of the Radical Civic Union, disagreed: "This is a great opportunity. I ask you to reflect, let's not tell women making these demands 'no'."

The divisions inside the chamber were mirrored on the streets outside, where opponents and supporters gathered for all-night vigils.

Police had earlier erected barricades to keep the two sides apart but that did not prevent the occasional shouting match.

### ***Growing momentum***

The vote comes a year after lawmakers in neighbouring Chile approved lifting that country's total ban on abortions.

The momentum in favour of a change in the law in Argentina has grown over the past months and was further boosted by the overwhelming vote for overturning the abortion ban in Ireland.

There have been huge marches backing the bill led by #NiUnaMenos (#NotOneLess), a movement first created to fight violence against women but which has since expanded across much of Latin America to stand up for women's rights.

Tens of thousands of people have shown their support by wearing green handkerchiefs but there has also been stiff opposition led by the Catholic Church.

Non-governmental organisations say an estimated 500,000 abortions a year are carried out clandestinely, often in conditions which pose a health risk for women and girls.

In most of Latin America there are tight restrictions on abortions and in some countries such as the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Honduras there is a total ban.

If Argentina were to pass the bill it would be the most populous nation in the region to lift restrictions on abortions.

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## **Public outrage shakes Argentina after murder of Anti-Femicide activist**

***The latest victim of gendered violence in the country was an anti-femicide activist who had been missing for a week.***

To Μωβ (09.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2nEJDxB> -

**"Ni una menos!"** ("Not one less!")

**"Vivas nos queremos!"** ("We want ourselves alive!")

**"Estado responsable!"** ("The state is responsible!")

These were some of the chants heard in the town of Moreno, Buenos Aires, where thousands gathered Saturday (8/4) to protest the femicide of **Micaela Garcia**, who herself was an activist against sexist violence.

The 21-year-old Argentine had been missing for a week after she had attended a nightclub in nearby Gualeguay. Her naked body was found Saturday morning in a rural area with signs of having been strangled.

Her suspected killer, Sebastian Wagner, arrested the same day, is a serial rapist with previous charges of rape against him. While his original sentencing was to be imprisoned for those instances of rape until at least 2020, when he was convicted in 2010, a judge had reduced his sentence. As such, the target of the protests in Moreno was also Judge Carlos Rossi, who had been responsible for releasing Wagner early.

*"Here are two people responsible: the murderer of Micaela and a judge who released him despite being advised against doing so,"* said Fabiana Tuñez, the president of the National Women's Council.

Garcia, a university student, was involved with various social movements and championed the struggle against femicides of women in Argentina, her father told reporters.

*"We are going to live to try to achieve a more just society, as Micaela intended. Pain has to serve us to change society,"* explained Nestor Garcia, the young woman's father.

A recent documentary by Alejandra Perdomo, titled "Every 30 Hours," found that gendered violence in Argentina kills one woman every 30 hours.

According to Casa del Encuentro, almost 3,000 women have been killed since 2008, when the organization started to monitor femicides. Despite the inclusion of "femicide" in the criminal code in 2012, only one man has been sentenced for femicide charges since then.

According to Pedromo, the anti-femicide movement "Ni Una Menos" made the issue more visible, resulting in a surge of complaints.

While Argentina has been a pioneer in implementing laws defending the rights of the LGBTI community over the past decade during the progressive administrations of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez, the country only recently started to measure the extent of the femicide issue, after an accumulation of horrendous murders were covered in the media.

The movement against femicide saw a resurgence in Argentina last year, sparking a wider uprising across the region against gender violence and the systemic impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of femicide and domestic abuse.

For additional, important information, from "Newsweek", 10 April:

Pope Francis—one of Argentina's best-known citizens—telephoned Garcia's parents, Yuyo Garcia and Andrea Lescano. Writing on Facebook, Yuyo Garcia said: *"This is how far your fight and message has come, my beautiful. Thank you Holy Father for your humility and your respect!"*

Speaking to the Argentinian Radio Mitre on April 9, Argentine President Mauricio Macri argued that "the laws we have are enough" but criticized the judge for releasing Wagner early.

*"We cannot keep these kinds of judges. We all have to understand that we have to take responsibility, there is not a president or a government that solves the problems magically, we all are."*

According to La Casa del Encuentro, an Argentinian feminist organization monitoring femicides in the country, 230 women were murdered between January 1 and October 31, 2016—roughly one every 30 hours.

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