

Argentinean activists vow to continue abortion fight



Buenos Aires, August 10 (RHC)-- Argentinean activists and feminists organized in the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion have vowed to continue their fight after the Senate rejected the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Bill, which would have ended the criminalization of women who choose to abort within the first 14 weeks.

While the defeat was expected, with preliminary counts early Wednesday showing 38 senators would vote against the bill, and only 31 would support it, tens of thousands of Argentinean activists flooded the streets across the country.

After the vote, however, the joy of those supporting the legalization gave way to sadness and anger, while anti-choice activists and Argentina's Catholic church celebrated the result. In some areas, altercations took place with police and activist, after officers attempted to extinguish bonfires set up to keep protesters warm. One woman was injured and seven people detained.

Solidarity for the cause extended beyond Argentina's borders with social media users across the world condemning the result of the Senate's vote. Users also highlighted the decision maintained a law written in 1921 and denounced the fact that religious "beliefs" guided the final vote: "Every minute and a half a woman aborts in Argentina, and that is not a 'belief,' it is the reality," one user said.

Despite the defeat, a sense of historic hope prevailed. Twitter activists of the campaign highlighted their victories beyond the law. “No one has ever given us anything. We fight to conquer and defend our rights, and now we know we are united and organized, and that cannot be read in any other way that is not progress.”

For 13 years the National Campaign has sought to end underground and unsafe abortions, which threaten the lives of between 300,000 and 500,000 women according to Argentina’s ministry of health, and claims the lives of around 100 women every year. This year expectations were high after the lower house of Congress approved the bill in June, but the clamor for a law to protect women’s lives was met with indifference by a mostly conservative Senate.

In Cordoba, after the bill was rejected, women held a massive vigil, the chant “Alert! Alert! Alert! Feminist struggle is marching through Latin America” was often heard during the gathering. A similar rallying cry was sung in Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, and Uruguay, among other countries, have women demanded the right to legal abortion in solidarity with Argentinean women.

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