

Debate on Legalizing Abortion Begins in Chile



Santiago, May 24 (RHC-NNN) -- Chile, one of a handful of the world's countries that outlaws abortion in all cases, will debate a bill this year that seeks to relax the ban in certain circumstances, a government spokesman announced.

President Michelle Bachelet, who was re-elected and took office in March, had pledged a change in the law ahead of her election.

The new Chilean bill does not contemplate fully legalizing abortion, but will seek to allow it when there is danger to the mother's life, in the case of rape and when the fetus could not survive.

Such a rule would bring socially conservative Chile in line with much of the rest of Latin America.

Many attribute the shift in attitudes to the outcry caused last year in Chile by the case of an 11-year old girl who became pregnant after being raped by her stepfather.

“(The bill) forms part of the government's program and the basic objective is that in Chile there will be no taboo subjects, that this issue can be discussed,” said government spokesman Alvaro Elizalde at a press conference.

Elizalde said that the bill would be sent to Congress, where Bachelet's center-left coalition controls a majority, in the second half of 2014.

Reversing the abortion ban is one of several moves the government is making to dismantle the legacy of dictator Augusto Pinochet, who ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990 and just before stepping down passed a law that banned abortions in all cases.

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