



Mexico City to vote on abortion

Mexico City's legislative assembly is to vote on whether to legalise abortion in the city, the capital of the world's second-largest Roman Catholic country.

If passed as expected, abortions would be limited to pregnancies in the first trimester, only in Mexico City.

Mexico City currently allows abortion in cases of rape, if the woman's life is at risk or if there are signs of severe defects in the foetus.

Catholic bishops in Mexico have spoken out against the proposed law.

Mexico City's legislature, which represents the city's population of 20m, is dominated by the leftist PRD, the party of the mayor, Marcelo Ebrard.

He has ordered riot police to deploy around the assembly's buildings after abortion opponents promised big protests if the law is passed.

Court challenge

Opinion polls in Mexico, which is 90% Catholic, indicate people are evenly split on the issue.

The assembly has courted controversy in Mexico before, recently allowing same-sex civil unions. It is currently considering legalising euthanasia.

Opponents of the abortion law have promised to challenge it in the courts if it is passed.

The authors of the draft law argue that at least 1,500 women have died in Mexico over the last decade as a result of illegal abortions performed in unhygienic backstreet clinics.

Many victims of rape are denied access to legal abortion, Human Rights Watch said in a report last year.

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