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Uruguay

# President promulgates law decriminalizing abortion

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**A draft has been approved by Uruguay's national parliament making it the first South American country to broadly decriminalize abortion, which only exists so far in Cuba, Guyana, Puerto Rico and the Federal District of Mexico.**

The Uruguayan President, José Mujica, promulgated this Monday an act adopted by the national parliament on October 17, 2012, which decriminalizes abortion up to the 12th week of pregnancy, by decision of the woman, provided that is carried out under the supervision of the state.

The draft had been voted for by the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives (MPS). The President ratified the initiative, unlike his predecessor, Tabare Vasquez, who vetoed the bill.

The EFE agency explained that the new legal standard does not technically "legalize" abortion, but decriminalizes it, provided that certain procedures regulated by the state are complied with.

During the first 12 weeks, women must go to a medical consultation to discuss the circumstances and conditions ensuing from the conception, which include "situations of economic, social or family hardship or age".

Then, the doctor will take the case to an interdisciplinary team composed of psychologists, gynaecologists and social workers, who will inform the women on the "risks" of abortion and the alternatives to this decision, such as "social and economic support programs", or "the possibility of giving your child up for adoption".

Women will have a period of five days of reflection before the abortion if that is their final choice. Abortions may be carried out at any public or private health centre in the country or, failing that, the centre must ensure that this is carried out by third parties, in cases of conscientious objection. Abortions that are carried out outside this procedure will continue to be illegal and therefore penalized.

For the law to come into effect, the Parliament and the authorities of the Ministry of Public Health will have to implement a regulation, which should be ready within a month.

The head of state explained that decriminalization was "very much more intelligent than a ban". Turning to sectors of society who reject the measure, he said that "from the point of view of principle it can be reprehensible, but from the point of view of historical practice, of what has happened, I think that many more lives are saved."