

# Abortion history, laws, women's activism, and abortion on demand in Norway

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# The first years of the struggle

1899	Department of Justice sends a document where they confirm that induced abortion can only be allowed when the issue is to free the woman from a danger that only the procedure can avoid her from, and also when the pelvis is so narrow that normal birth cannot happen
1902	Penal Code 22. May 1902 § 245 "Woman, who takes abortive measures or against the law kills the fetus of which she is pregnant, or assist in such, will be punished for fetal removal by prison up to three years. Any assistance from other person to do so can be punished with up to 6 years
1915	Katti Anker Møller gives her talk: «The liberation of motherhood » in the association for the right to vote
1913	The abortion battle begins in Norway. Katti Anker Møller says women should be able to seek doctors to obtain abortions. Treated abortions that year - Ullevål municipal Hospital in Oslo - is 31
1918	Treated abortions at Ullevål is 227

# The big resistance

1920-29	One hundred persons are convicted for abortion, mostly non-medical people
1924	23. April is the opening day for the first Maternal Hygiene office in Oslo, as a result of collaboration between Katti Anker Møller and the women in the Labor Party. The office gives contraceptive advice and counselling and public information
1929	Treated abortions at Ullevål grows to 357
1934	Dep. Of Justice appoints a committee to rework § 245, and to make an abortion law. Doctor Tove Mohr, daughter of Katti Anker Mølleris appointed to the committee
1935	207 000 people who resist the law and are against abortion sign a petition against the committee's report. The report is then abandoned bu the Labor party.

# War, strict laws, one more time around

1940-45	The Nazi government (war) closes down all the maternal Hygiene Offices and burn all their material. All work towards a new law is stopped
1950	Maternal Hygiene office in Oslo opens their first branch for giving advice to women seeking abortion. One third of the women who seek advice are unmarried. Half of those who have their request for abortion rejected, do not go through with the pregnancy. In the 1950ies, there are annually around 3000 legal and 7-10 000 illegal abortions
1956	A new abortion law is presented. It aims at stopping the flow of illegal abortions without opening up for more legal abortions

# Awakening again

1960	The parliament accepts a new abortion law. Abortion is allowed at a hospital and a committee of doctors accept the procedure. Abortion is not allowed on social reasons, and illegal abortions are still punishable. The law is put to action in
1964-74	The number of legal abortions in the health services increase a lot – from 3000 in 1964 to 15 000 in 1974. Approved abortion applications increased from 72 % to almost 100% in the same period
1969	The labor party declares «Self-determination of Abortion» as core policy, and launches a new campaign for more liberal abortion politics
1970	The office of the Oslo branch of the labor party opens up a new office for contraception and abortion , with dr. Aud Blegen Svinland as head
1971	The «socialist doctors association's clinic for sexual information» - a landmark clinic – is opened
1973	9. November is the international day for abortion, with demonstrations in Oslo, Germany, Austria, Denmark and USA

# A law is born

1974	The Feminists, the Women's league, the Women's front, and Norwegian association for women's affairs form « The women's action for abortion on demand” in Oslo. Doctors and health officers representing left-side parties launch “The information center for abortion on demand”. The initiative spreads to other cities
1974	30. October is the day when the «Action for abortion on demand» submits their petition, signed by 610 000 people
1975	The suggested new law, with access to abortion on demand, is debated in the parliament. The law fails because of one vote, a Christian Socialist vote. Forslag om selvbestemt abort er oppe i Stortinget. Social reasons for wanting an abortion is accepted, but the committees remain, and criminalization remains
1978	8. March 20.000 participate in a demonstration in Oslo, and all over the country, for abortion on demand
1978	30. May Norway gets abortion on demand

# But the struggle continues.....

- 1978-2010      Abortion numbers are stable, or decreasing. Contraceptive uptake is high. Medical abortion is introduced and accepted widely. OB/GYN doctors may object to performing abortions, but hardly any do so. Abortions are free of charge, and every county has services. The abortion debate stops somewhat – though the edges are debated here and there. The 12 week limit, early ultrasound, (late abortions after 22 weeks, are banned) and prenatal screening and abortions are debated over and over.

# And the battle is never completely won

- 2013-14 After several attempts to limit the abortion on demand law, a new conservative government tries to expand conscientious objection to also be relevant for General Doctors. The resistance is enormous. Women all over the country want no change in the abortion law. The debate becomes extremely tough and again 20 000 people demonstrate against this in 8. March. After a lengthy debate in public media, the new proposal is withdrawn, and abortion seekers no longer have to go through a GP.