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Send in the abortion drones: We could use this Irish pro-choice tech protest here in the U.S., too

A show of "solidarity" highlights how hard it is still is for women to end a pregnancy

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It's an act of defiance to raise awareness, a gesture of "solidarity." It won't terminate the pregnancy of a single desperate woman in a place where abortion is illegal. It's still a good idea. But it'd be better if it went all in — and not just across the Atlantic.

Pro-choice advocates have scheduled a drone drop for next week to send abortion pills to a border area between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to protest restrictive reproductive health laws in both places. Rita Harrold, one of the effort's organizers, told the Guardian this week that "The action is an act of solidarity

(<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/15/drone-will-fly-abortion-pills-into-northern-ireland-as-act-of-solidarity>) from women in the south, where abortion is criminalized, with women in the north, where abortion is also criminalized and unfortunately there have recently been a number of prosecutions. We will be sending the drone over the border and bringing the pills into Northern Ireland to show women that they are still available and they are still safe."

There, a group of women who are not pregnant have pledged to take the pills — mifepristone and misoprostol — to demonstrate their safety and to make a plea for reproductive rights.

In a statement, one of the groups organizing the event, Women On Waves, said the act will “highlight the violation of human rights caused by the existing laws that criminalize abortion (<http://www.womenonwaves.org/en/page/6255/abortion-drone--flight-to-northern-ireland>) in both the north and south of Ireland except in very limited circumstances.”

One can understand why the groups are cautiously not vowing to give the pills to currently pregnant women — as the Guardian reports, “The maximum penalty for the crime of administering a drug to induce miscarriage under the relevant law in Northern Ireland, the Offenses Against The Person Act 1861, is life imprisonment. In the Irish Republic, the offense of procuring an abortion carries a potential 14-year jail term.”

And opponents of abortion rights are keeping a sharp eye on the event — a representative from an anti choice group called Precious Life told the Guardian, “I am currently seeking legal advice and may very well be in contact with the Police Service of Northern Ireland to ensure that these pills will be confiscated and to ensure that they are not used to destroy the lives of unborn children. These people are hell-bent on destroying lives, but we will be doing everything in our power, legally, to protect lives.” Because nothing says you care about protecting lives like punishing women with potential lifelong jail sentences for exercising control over their own bodies.

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Mary Elizabeth Williams (<http://www.maryelizabethwilliams.net>) is a staff writer for Salon and the author of "A Series of Catastrophes & Miracles." Follow her on Twitter:

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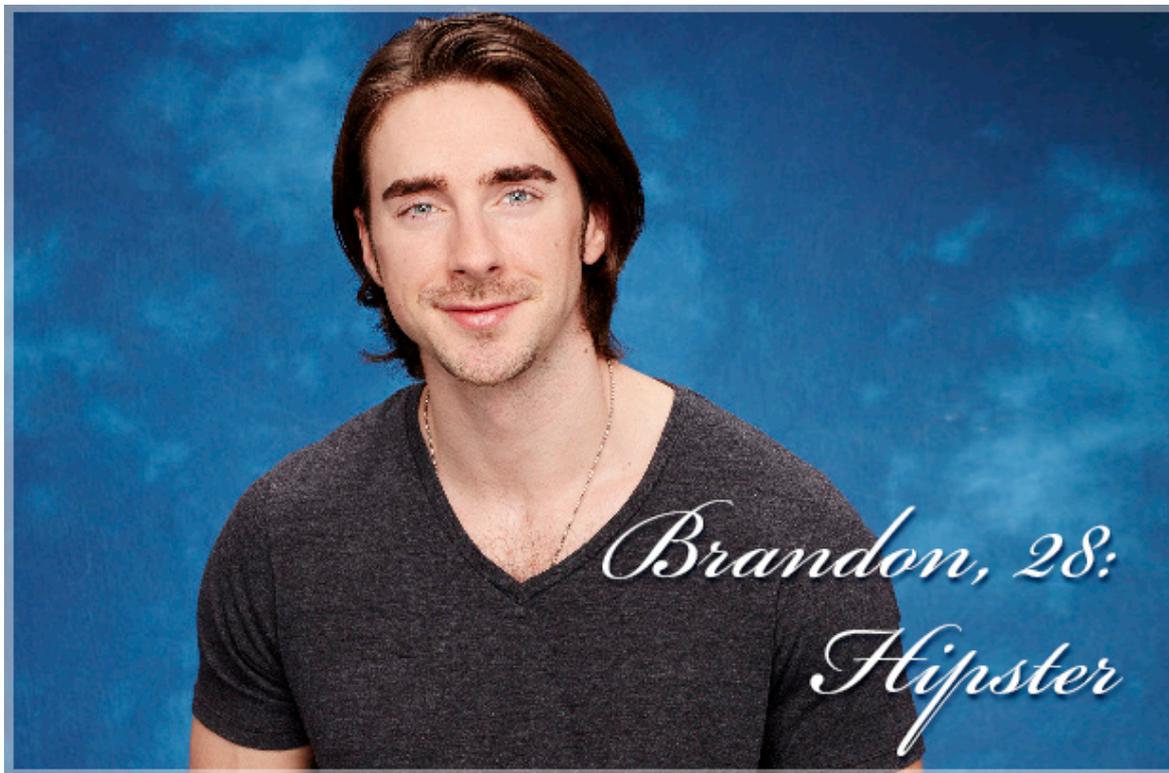
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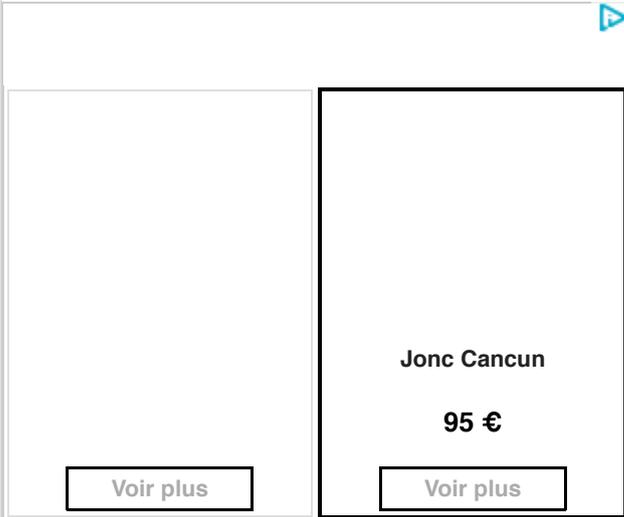
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