

## NEWS

# Respected humanitarian doctor group publishes abortion how-to guide

*Claiming to be against 'unsafe abortion,' Doctors Without Borders is now providing a guide so mothers can commit abortions at home.*

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*A Doctors without Borders van.*

Spencer Platt / Getty Images

*By Susan Yoshihara*

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 28, 2020 (C-Fam) — The humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders launched online medical abortion guidelines that its partner group acknowledges will be used for do-it-yourself abortions.

Doctors Without Borders, also known as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), says it “has teamed up with” HowToUseAbortionPill.org to create an online video guide on how to use pills to abort an unborn child up to 22 weeks. In a cartoon-based guide, MSF shows how to “push out the pregnancy,” in “a process that is similar to miscarriage.” MSF says its “goal is to ensure that everyone” can get the information “no matter who you are, where you are.”

“The fact that Doctors Without Borders is a recognizable, reputable group also might make people more comfortable with the procedure,” an unidentified representative of HowToUseAbortionPill.org said in an interview with Vice. “We do not see this piece as an

instructional guide for self-managed abortion,” she said of the video. “However, we know that much of our online content...is used for self-managed abortion.”

HowToUseAbortionPill.org alerts users to the fact that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has made it illegal to sell the abortion drug mifepristone online or in pharmacies, that five U.S. states have made self-induced abortions illegal, and 18 states prohibit telemedicine abortions. The website calls itself “an online community run by dedicated individuals who believe that all women, regardless of where they live, should have access to a safe abortion option.” There is no information giving the names of its staff, an address, or who funds the website.

The HowToUseAbortionPill.org program manager said that, “because the how-to videos are available to the general public in multiple languages,” the MSF guide, ostensibly meant for health professionals in humanitarian settings, “can double as a complete guide to doing your own abortion, outside of medical supervision.”

Doctors Without Borders/MSF is a critic of the U.S. Mexico City Policy that bans taxpayer funds for promoting or performing overseas abortion. The group says it does not take U.S. funds, and that it is not affected by the policy.

“You don’t need any advanced technology or specialized medical interventions in order to provide medication abortion safely,” the MSF website says. “All you need” are information, medications, and “mutual respect and trust,” and for that reason, abortions have increased “for millions of women and girls around the world — and especially in low-resource and humanitarian settings.”

Children born prematurely at 22 weeks have survived outside the womb. Doctors Without Borders/MSF warns humanitarians in the video guide that if the child makes noise or moves after the abortion, it could be upsetting for the woman who has aborted the child. It says that the woman may want to hold the aborted “pregnancy,” take it home, and even give it a burial.

MSF does not list abortion among its humanitarian services on its website, but says it is part of its maternal health program, arguing that “unsafe abortion” is the fifth leading case of maternal mortality after postpartum hemorrhage, sepsis, complications from delivery, and hypertensive disorders. “Of all these, unsafe abortion is the only one that is completely avoidable,” the MSF website says. It does not list avoiding abortion as a way to avoid maternal deaths.

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