

Portuguese nurse who ran abortion clinic jailed

LEVEL ONE - ELEMENTARY

Pre-reading activities

A Discussion point

Do you agree with abortion?

If yes, why do you agree? If not, why don't you agree?

B Questions

Find the answers to these questions as quickly as possible:

1. How many women were on trial.
2. What was the maximum sentence for this crime?
3. How old is Sandra Cardoso?
4. What was the prison sentence for the nurse who performed the abortions?
5. What did Maria do Ceu steal?
6. How much did an abortion cost?
7. Where do rich Portuguese women go for abortions?
8. How many Portuguese women visit illegal abortion clinics each year?

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Last week the trial ended of 17 Portuguese women who were accused of having abortions at an illegal clinic. The nurse who ran the clinic was sent to prison but only one of the 17 women was found guilty.

Sandra Cardoso, 21, said that she went to the illegal clinic in Maia three years ago because she was very poor, her partner was violent and her daughter was sick. She was ordered to pay a small fine or spend four months in prison. The maximum possible sentence for this crime was three years in prison.

The nurse who ran the clinic was called Maria do Ceu. She was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison. Three of those years were for breaking the very strict abortion laws in this strongly Roman Catholic country. The other five and a half years were for stealing morphine and other dangerous drugs from a hospital. The panel of three judges said: "We understand the political, social and scientific questions in this case, but we must follow the law." The trial was held in a large tent at the tennis club in the town of Maia, because the law court was not big enough.

Supporters of the accused women were both happy and angry. "We are glad for these women, because none of them will go to jail now," said Silvestrina Silva, of the Right to Choice group. "But it is terrible that they were put on trial. The trial shows that illegal abortions in this country are a fact, and that people are still punished for having abortions in this country," she said. Dina Nunes, a psychologist, said: "This is the 21st century, but women in Portugal still do not have the right to decide what they do with their own bodies and lives."

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Women who became pregnant in Maia or nearby Oporto and did not have enough money to travel to abortion clinics in Spain were told about the secret clinic by hospital personnel, chemists, taxi drivers or their own friends or relatives. The pregnant women had to pay \$450 for the operation but none of them had enough money. They all left items of jewellery - wedding rings, necklaces or earrings - while they tried to find the rest of the money.

The case divided Portuguese public opinion. Most of the women come from very poor districts. All of them were arrested because of the jewellery they gave the nurse who ran the clinic. "They are all poor. If they had money, they would have gone to Spain or somewhere else," said Ms Silva, whose group helped to organise international support for the Maia women.

Supporters say the women are victims. "There is evidence that pregnancy is a significant factor in suicides in young people," said Milice Ribeiro, a psychologist.

Some people demanded a new abortion law for Portuguese women last week, saying that the current law was ignored by almost 40,000 women who visited illegal clinics every year. Duarte Vilar, the director of Portugal's Family Planning Association, said: "Illegal abortions have caused a number of deaths and thousands of hospital admissions. We must treat this as a matter of public health."

The Guardian Weekly 24-1-2002, page 4

C Detailed questions

1. How many of the 17 accused were found guilty?
2. Why did Sandra Cardoso go to the illegal clinic?
3. Why was the trial held at the tennis club?
4. Who told the women about the illegal clinics?
5. What items did they leave while they tried to find the money to pay for the abortions?
6. Where do most of the women come from?
7. Why were they arrested?
8. What, according to the article, is a significant factor in suicides in young people?

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D Vocabulary practice

Complete the table

VERB	NOUN
punish	_____
_____	accusation
operate	_____
_____	organisation
_____	theft
decide	_____
divide	_____
_____	treatment

E Grammar – The Passive.

Read the notes below, and then answer the following questions.

The past simple passive form: *Was started* *Were started* (regular)
 Was eaten *Were eaten* (irregular)

Examples of the past simple passive:

- a) *The women were accused of having abortions* b) *The nurse was sent to prison*

Uses

- bii) (He/she) sent the nurse to prison,
- In sentence b the nurse is the subject of the sentence. In bii the person who sends her to prison is the subject. In the passage the writer chooses to use the passive, as the nurse is more important in subject position.

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1. Underline all of the examples of the past simple passive in the text.

2. Complete each sentence in the passive.

a) The police arrested many protesters.

Many protesters were arrested (by the police)

b) They sent the protesters to jail.

The protesters _____

c) The scientists discovered a new cure for the disease.

A new cure _____

d) The teacher told students to read this book.

Students _____

e) They built this library in 1987.

The Library _____

f) Someone fixed the broken window.

The broken window _____

F Discussion

Should abortion be legally available everywhere? Why do some people think abortion should be illegal?