

KZN health MEC commends SAPS for arrest of illegal abortion practitioners

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KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has commended the SAPS for the arrest of a Durban couple who have been found guilty of managing an illegal abortion facility.

When appearing in the Durban Regional Court on Monday, the couple pleaded guilty to operating this facility, on Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme (West) Street. The Ugandan national and his South African wife were arrested in a police sting operation in December. They were charged with five counts of contravening sections of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, and are due for sentencing on 02 March 2018.

Reacting to these developments, MEC Dhlomo urged women to remember that those who choose to terminate a pregnancy have a Constitutional right to do so in a safe environment, where they will not be subjected to judgment and stigma. "We would like to commend the SAPS for the great work that they have done, which has culminated in the Durban couple being found guilty. For people to conduct abortion, without authorisation, is illegal. This Department has gone all out, creating anti-illegal abortion awareness, staging marches and removing stickers that promote this practice. We commend the work done by our police. It must alert the public that, if anybody has any pressure to terminate a pregnancy, the right place to go is a clinic or a hospital. That is where you will find people who are trained to provide this service. Do not go to a backstreet abortion facility. Many people who have gone there have not come back to tell the story. They have died. So, we are really concerned as the Department of Health."

The dangers of illegal abortion include Death; Severe bleeding; Uterine perforation; Tearing of the cervix; Severe damage to the genitals and abdomen; Internal infection of the abdomen and blood poisoning; and Increased risk of infertility.

According to the 2012 Saving Mothers report, in South Africa 186 women died of a septic miscarriage in public health facilities; 23% of which were caused by unsafe or illegal abortions.

And, a study by the South African Medical Research Council in 2010 also reported that 49 % of abortions are undergone by young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years and that these take place outside a hospital or clinic.

Since the Department intensified its Anti-Illegal Abortion Campaign in 2015, the number of women presenting to health facilities in KZN with complications after botched illegal abortions has significantly decreased.

The department measures its success by judging with the increase of the number of women who come forward for legal Termination of Pregnancy (2013 = 8 058); (2014 = 9 785); (2015= 10 152); (2016 = 14 209).

There has also been a significant reduction in the number of women reporting in the facilities with Incomplete Abortions compared to the start of the campaigns. In 2014, the number stood at 10 786, and was reduced to 10 152 in 2015; and 8 633 in 2016. There has also been a marked increase in the number of facilities offering termination of pregnancies -from 14 in 2015 to 42 in 2017. There has also been a big decrease in miscarriage-related maternal deaths over the past 3 years in KZN, compared to the previous triennium 2011-2013 =53, 2014-2016 =27 (2015 =13), (2016 =5).

The KZN Department of Health now enjoys the benefit of being the preferred custodian for valuable and trustworthy information when it comes to issues of promotion of safe TOP's.



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