

# Mexico: women's groups dismayed after judges dodge abortion decision

Tuesday 4 August 2020, by [AGREN David](#) (Date first published: 30 July 2020).

- **Supreme court votes against proposal on technical grounds**
- **Plan could have opened path towards decriminalization**

Mexican women's groups have expressed deep disappointment after the supreme court dodged a ruling on a proposal which could have opened a legal path towards decriminalizing abortion.

In a 4-1 decision, the court voted on Wednesday against the proposal for technical reasons – without addressing arguments that restrictions on abortion violated women's rights and contravened international treaties to which [Mexico](#) is a signatory.

"They didn't even need 20 fucking minutes to shoot down a rare opportunity," [tweeted](#) Las Brujas del Mar, a feminist collective in Veracruz state.

"The aggravation isn't because we failed to understand that what was discussed yesterday was a 'problem of form and not of substance'," [the collective](#) continued. "The problem is that the substance was not discussed, and the form still matters more than women's lives."

The case centred on a court injunction in Veracruz, which ordered the legislature to rewrite its laws to remove penalties for abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

On Wednesday, Justice Norma Piña expressed doubts the court could dictate the content of laws to be written by state legislatures and warned "the court would fall into judicial activism".

Only two of Mexico's 32 states – Mexico City and Oaxaca – have [decriminalized abortion](#). More than half the states have approved laws further restricting abortion access or constitutionally prohibiting it over the past dozen years. The high court, however, has upheld a federal norm allowing women to seek abortions in situations of rape.

"On the social side of things, we've advanced enormously," said Rebeca Ramos, director of Gire, a reproductive rights organisation. "On decriminalization, it's been much slower, and we're left depending on the political will of local lawmakers."

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – a self-described leftist with social and fiscal conservative tendencies – has not made any moves towards reforming the country's abortion laws, even though his party controls both chambers of congress and more than half the state legislatures.

The federal government responded to the court case [by referring](#) to comments from the interior minister, Olga Sánchez Cordero, who said on Wednesday morning: "The fact that a woman faces a criminal trial for this kind of situation is ... something inadmissible."

López Obrador said that he respected the court decision.

[“Women’s rights are not a priority \[for López Obrador’s government\] even if he says they are,”](#) said Maricruz Ocampo, who works with victims of sexual violence in Querétaro. “His actions demonstrate they are not.”

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