

Access to safe abortions saves lives: WHO chief

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The head of the World Health Organization said Wednesday that access to safe abortions saves lives, after a leaked draft ruling indicated the US Supreme Court was mulling ending nationwide legal abortions.

Without explicitly mentioning the US case, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that "restricting access to abortion does not reduce the number of procedures."

"It drives [women](#) and [girls](#) towards unsafe ones," he said in a tweet.

"Access to safe abortion saves lives."

His comments came amid a firestorm in United States, sparked by an unprecedented leak of a Supreme Court draft ruling, which suggested the court was poised to overturn the nationwide right to an abortion.

If the draft ruling is confirmed by the court, it would overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which enshrined abortion rights across the country.

Abortion laws would then be left up to individual state legislatures, with as many as half expected to enact bans or new restrictions.

For many women, the potential loss of [abortion rights](#) across much of the United States raises the prospect of being forced to travel hundreds of miles for the procedure or giving birth in traumatic circumstances.

"Women should always have the right to choose when it comes to their bodies and their [health](#)," Tedros said.

The UN health agency issued new guidelines on abortion care in March, in a bid to help protect the health of women and girls and prevent unsafe abortions.

According to the WHO, around 25 million unsafe abortions are conducted around the world annually, with some 39,000 women and girls dying as a result each year, and millions more hospitalised due to

complications.

Most of the deaths happen in lower-income countries, with Africa accounting for a full 60 percent and Asia for 30 percent, the data shows.

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