

Legalizing Death: Why is the West Embracing Euthanasia?

France's National Assembly is set to vote on a bill that would legalize assisted dying for adults suffering from incurable illnesses, marking a significant shift in the country's approach to "end-of-life care."

The proposed legislation stipulates strict eligibility criteria: applicants must be over 18, French citizens or residents, and experiencing intolerable, untreatable pain from advanced or terminal illnesses.

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A medical team must confirm eligibility, and applicants must reaffirm their decision after a reflection period. The medication could be self-administered or provided with help from a healthcare professional if necessary.

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The bill, backed by centrist and far-left Members of Parliament (MPs), faces opposition from conservative and right-wing parties and segments of the medical community.

While euthanasia remains controversial due to France's Catholic traditions, public opinion is largely supportive. Currently, only passive euthanasia and deep sedation are legal in France. The initiative aligns France with other European nations like the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain, where laws on assisted dying already exist.

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Religious leaders have voiced strong opposition. The Conference of Religious Leaders in France, representing Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist communities, issued a joint statement warning that the proposed law “risks exerting a subtle but real pressure on the elderly, the ill or the disabled” to feel they are “being a burden.”

President Emmanuel Macron has expressed support for the bill, describing it as a “law of fraternity.” He has also suggested a possible referendum if parliamentary discussions falter. However, the popular leader of France’s right-wing National Rally Party (RN) and President Macron’s long-time political rival, Marine Le Pen, has condemned the bill.

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“We must prioritize life and provide the necessary support for those at the end of their journey,” Le Pen said during a previous parliamentary session. “This bill sends the wrong message about the value we place on human life.”

The debate in France comes as multiple states in the US are likewise considering laws regarding assisted suicide and euthanasia. This includes Delaware, where Democrat Governor Matt Meyer signed a bill legalizing assisted dying last week.

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