



Zurich-Forch, 21 October 2021

A note from DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity

Assisted Dying Bill Reading

This Friday 22 October 2021, Westminster will discuss the Assisted Dying Bill introduced by Baroness Meacher. Six years have passed since the last debate on a prospective legislation. Public support for such Bill has remained high for many years. The Swiss non-profit membership association “DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity” urges Westminster to follow the example of countries in Europe and worldwide to implement an assisted dying law which adheres to the human right of an individuals’ choice over the time and manner of their end of suffering and life.

The negative effects of denying assisted dying

For many years, Britons have wished to have choice over their end in life. Since they have no safe and legal option at home, they travel to “DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity” in Switzerland. Close to 500 Britons have done so since 2002. Being a non-profit association, DIGNITAS eases access by offering reduction and exemption of costs for those who need it. But still, people have to travel earlier than if they could receive help at home. And their journey is overshadowed by their loved ones being considered criminals. Compassion is twisted to crime. Some of those who cannot travel end up attempting a lonely suicide – with high risk of failure and consequently negative effects.

It’s time for a change

Ten years ago, the Commission on Assisted Dying published its report titled: “The current legal status of assisted dying is inadequate and incoherent...” Indeed, the late PAUL LAMB, a man paralysed from the neck downward, battling in the UK courts for his right to die put it to the point: “As easy as it might sound to simply shove me out of the country, I know that I – and many others like me – deserve better treatment.” Surely, in the 21st century, the UK has something better to offer than leaving Britons to travel to DIGNITAS or to jump off cliffs or shoot or poison themselves. Westminster has the chance of correcting this. DIGNITAS urges politicians to respect the human right of all Britons and legalise assisted dying.

e-mail: info@dignitas.ch web: www.dignitas.ch

Facebook: [dignitas.ch](https://www.facebook.com/dignitas.ch) Twitter: [dignitas_org](https://twitter.com/dignitas_org)

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BACKGROUND:

DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity was founded in May 1998 with the aim, through international legal and political work, to make the proven Swiss model of freedom of choice, self-determination and personal responsibility in life and at life's end also accessible to individuals abroad.

DIGNITAS' advisory concept – combining palliative care, suicide attempt prevention, advance directives/decisions and assisted dying – offers a basis for good decision-making to shape life until the end.

Through litigation, DIGNITAS obtained a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in 2011 acknowledging the right/freedom of a competent individual to decide on the manner and time of his or her own end in life and confirming this to be protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

DIGNITAS has been engaged in many lawsuits in Europe and Canada, and has provided in-depth submissions and received visits by expert and parliamentary committees from Great Britain, Australia, Canada, etc. when laws were discussed and planned for the protection of a patient's autonomy and human dignity.

The founder of the charitable DIGNITAS organisation is Ludwig A. Minelli, an attorney-at-law specialising in human rights. The team of DIGNITAS consists of 32 part-time employees and it is supported by several external experts in the fields of medicine, law, IT and auditing.