

Death with dignity

28 June 1999

The Council of Europe discredits itself (EHF press release)

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, meeting on Friday, June 25, 1999 in Strasbourg, adopted a report by Mrs Gatterer, Austrian parliamentary member of the EPP, concerning euthanasia. This report brings shame on the Council of Europe for its lack of impartiality and objectivity.

Contrary to the the Council of Europe's practice of respect for plurality of opinion, the report takes into account only the well known intransigent position of a fraction of the Catholic hierarchy that rejects without the slightest nuance any help to people who ask to die with dignity.

There is no mention in the report of other opinions though they were widely circulated in the press.

No account is taken of the work of ethics committees and scientific studies.

The report does not even have the honesty to refer to opinion polls that show that, in several European countries, people want legalized euthanasia, death when desired.

The recommendation to the Committee of Ministers (made up of national ministers of the member countries) which has been adopted is clearly biased.

Judge for yourself:

The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers *maintain the absolute prohibition on intentionally putting an end to the lives of terminally ill and the dying*

i: since the right to life, especially with regard to the terminally ill and dying, is guaranteed by the Member States pursuant to Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights which states that "death may not be intentionally inflicted on anyone".

ii. since the desire to die expressed by someone who is incurably ill or dying can never constitute a legal basis for his death in the hands of a third party;

iii. since the desire to die expressed by someone who is incurably ill or dying can never serve as legal justification for the execution of actions designed to cause death.

Note the misuse of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. How can one say that it "inflicts" death on someone who is actually asking for it?

In the year of its 50th anniversary, the Council of Europe could have offered a better showcase for the principles it is supposed to promote.