



Zurich-Forch, 2 May 2018

A note from

DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity

Ignorance, irresponsibility and hypocrisy – How a majority of UK politicians violate human rights and create suffering and costs

For many years, there have been various attempts in the UK to implement the right of people to choose their final day when suffering from a severe illness. A majority of UK politicians keep ignoring the wish of the public for freedom of choice in ‘last matters’, thus violating basic human rights and creating immense suffering and costs. It is time they are held responsible for their ignorant, irresponsible and hypocrite stand.

Just over a week ago, once again an individual from the UK has travelled to DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity, for having access to the human freedom and right to decide on time and manner of his own end of suffering and life, as it has been basically acknowledged by the European Court of Human Rights in 2011. This freedom and right has been violated by the UK once again – for the 394th (!) time now.

A majority of UK politicians ignore that these journeys cause a lot of suffering for the individual and his family and friends. Not only is it very hard for someone already in a deplorable health situation to travel abroad. It all has to take place in secret and with fear, as it is shadowed by an absurd law that threatens to criminalise loved ones who give their compassion and care – something which every suffering individual deserves.

These politicians also ignore that the police, which as to DIGNITAS’ experience is doing a good, careful and responsible job in investigating cases of Britons who travelled to DIGNITAS, would prefer to do more sensible work than having to disturb mourning loved ones because of an outdated law that treats them as criminals.

Politicians’ ignorant and irresponsible stand causes costs for the public, due to the unnecessary work that the police and the Crown Prosecution Service have to do. It also causes costs for the individual and his loved ones in preparing and making the journey to DIGNITAS – even if DIGNITAS waives all costs for individuals in a dire financial situation, as it is possible in line with the non-profit status of DIGNITAS.

On top of it all, these politicians’ ignorance pushes people in despair to take matters into their own hands and try high-risk suicide attempts: going in front of a train, jumping off a high building, shooting and poisoning oneself, and so on. In most cases, such suicide attempts fail,

with tragic consequences for the individual and traumatic impact for the family and third person such as train drivers, emergency rescue teams, etc. In some cases, elderly couples will ‘help each other’, one of them committing a crime and both facing the risk of failure. Is leaving an individual no other option than making use of such horrible methods what these politicians see as ‘dignified’ and ‘protection of life’? They are hypocrites.

Coming close to 400 Britons who have been forced by such politicians to go to DIGNITAS, it is time to call a spade a spade: To obstruct the implementing of assisted dying in the UK is ignorant, irresponsible and hypocrite. Opposing politicians violate human rights and freedoms. They are paid with tax money to represent people - which they no longer do. They need to be held responsible for their inactivity on something the large majority of people have wished for a long time: the right to pass away by choice and in peace at one’s home surrounded by loved ones.

It’s time to change the law. In the next election, these politicians do not deserve a supportive vote anymore. It’s time to replace them by more responsible, humane and real representatives of the public.

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BACKGROUND:

DIGNITAS – To live with dignity – To die with dignity was founded in May 1998 with the aim to advocate, educate and support for improving care and choice in life and at life's end and to bring the Swiss option of legal assisted dying to other countries so that people outside Switzerland will not have to make use of DIGNITAS’ services anymore.

DIGNITAS’s 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 time and manner 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 24 part-time employees and it is supported by several external experts in the fields of medicine and law.