

Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Inc. Education Fund

Oral Statement

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The practice of assisted suicide in Switzerland should deeply concern the Human Rights Council. As the Working Group report noted (148.59), Kenya has recommended that Switzerland prohibit assisted suicide in line with its commitment to the rights to life, health, and non-discrimination. Switzerland has not accepted the recommendation, but it should.

The number of assisted suicides in Switzerland has increased every year since 2008. Many people who are not terminally ill receive assisted suicide—including people with dementia and people with only mental illnesses like depression.¹

A study in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* found that the percentage of non-terminal assisted suicide patients in Switzerland was growing. It concluded that many patients were opting for suicide because they were “weary of life,” not because they had a “fatal or hopeless medical condition.”²

Under the lax Swiss law, a recipient of assisted suicide need not be a citizen of Switzerland. A study found that assisted suicides of foreign nationals in Switzerland were “increasing unabated.”³

Assisted suicide in Switzerland is simply out of control.

Assisted suicide can threaten the right to health by preventing patients from receiving the health care to which they are entitled, including mental health care and palliative care.

Assisted suicide threatens the “inherent right to life” of all human beings. The U.N. Human Rights Committee has expressed concern about “the lack of independent or judicial oversight to determine that a person seeking assistance to commit suicide is operating with full free and informed consent.” The Committee concluded that Switzerland “should consider amending its legislation” to ensure such oversight.⁴

Assisted suicide also undermines equality and non-discrimination. Swiss patients generally have assisted suicides because of concerns about dependency and reduced autonomy. But the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protects the right to life of disabled persons “on an equal basis with others.”

The facts about assisted suicide in Switzerland must be taken into account.

Thanks for your time.

¹ Federal Statistical Office, “Cause of Death Statistics 2014: Assisted Suicide and Suicide in Switzerland,” October 11, 2016.

² Susanne Fischer et al., “Suicide Assisted by Two Swiss Right-to-Die Organisations,” *Journal of Medical Ethics*, Vol. 34, No. 11 (2008), pp. 810-14.

³ Saskia Gauthier et al., “Suicide Tourism: A Pilot Study on the Swiss Phenomenon,” *Journal of Medical Ethics*, Vol. 41, No. 8 (2014).

⁴ U.N. Human Rights Committee, “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, Switzerland,” U.N. doc CCPR/C/CHE/CO/3, November 3, 2009.