

FEAMC statement on legalisation of euthanasia

18 January 2004

The European Federation of the Catholic Medical Associations (FEAMC) protests strongly against the Marty report which aims to the legalisation of euthanasia in the member states of the Council of Europe

This report conveys a serious misreading of the signification of the demand of death from the patients, even if they are at the end of their lives. The respect of patient's autonomy must not be an alibi to euthanasia: should we refrain from treating suicide attempts on the pretext that it was the patient's will ?

Euthanasia is not clearly defined:

- it is not distinguished from withholding and withdrawing treatments, becoming futile or refused by the patient (which comes within good medical practice);
- neither from some practices of alleviation of resistant pain or of unbearable anguish, which could eventually provoke a non wanted death.

The sense of the patient's "loss of dignity" is questionable.

The serious drifts, already observed in the Netherlands - only country having allowed euthanasia (under conditions) for several years - have not been mentioned.

The FEAMC reasserts its commitment:

- to the refusal of aggressive treatments without hope of recovery, and to withhold and/or withdraw active treatments as soon as it appears clearly that they have become futile, protecting patient's dignity by doing so.
- to the deeply human attitude of palliative care, to their development, and to their progress:
- to the human support of the patients at the end of their lives, and to the care of the deep distress which may be expressed by a demand of death, towards which euthanasia seems a simplistic and inhuman remedy.

The FEAMC

- worries about the risks that decriminalization of euthanasia could let run to the patients, and to the confidence they have in their physicians.

The FEAMC

- approves the amendments to the Draft Resolution of the Marty report proposed by Mr McNamara, and the corresponding Explanatory Memorandum
- worries about the remaining paragraphs of this draft resolution, which seem unacceptable
- maintain its commitment to the Council of Europe Recommendation 1418 (June 1999) on "Protection of the human rights and dignity of the terminally ill and the dying"

*In the name of the Committee of FEAMC
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