

Opening Statement Islamic perspective on Assisted Dying

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Assisted Dying, esteemed Colleagues, and Honourable Guests,

A chairde agus Assalamu Alaikum,

It is a profound honour for me to address this esteemed gathering today, offering insights into the Islamic viewpoint on assisted dying.

In the vast tapestry of ethical considerations surrounding end-of-life decisions, the Islamic perspective is woven with threads of sanctity, endurance, and conscientious objection.

In Islam, the unambiguous prohibition against suicide or assisted dying is unequivocally expressed in the Holy Qur'an, stating, "Do not kill yourselves, for verily God has been to you most merciful" (Al-Qur'an 4:29) and "Take not life which God has made sacred" (Al-Qur'an 6:151).

The Hadith, words of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), further reinforces this stance, asserting Islam's united opposition to euthanasia, assisted suicide and assisted dying, categorically denouncing these acts as tantamount to murder.

The sanctity of human life is a foundational principle in Islam, echoed in the Holy Qur'an and various Hadiths. Our faith emphasizes the importance of endurance and patience in the face of hardships, recognising suffering as an opportunity for spiritual growth. It is within this framework that we approach the complex issue of assisted dying.

Islam acknowledges the right to conscientious objection, respecting the autonomy of medical professionals and patients in end-of-life decisions.

However, our concerns lie in the potential consequences of legalising assisted dying. We fear it may lead individuals to choose death without addressing the underlying causes of their health issues, including mental health.

Moreover, there is a concern that vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities or the elderly, may feel pressured to opt for assisted death to avoid being perceived as burdensome.

The Islamic perspective also urges consideration of the potential neglect of long-term care and chronic diseases in the elderly if assisted death is legalised. We believe in the importance of a healthcare system that prioritises comprehensive care and addresses the root causes of suffering.

In our Brief on the Islamic perspective, you will find a more detailed exploration of these principles and concerns. It is our sincere hope that this document will serve as a valuable resource for the Committee as you navigate the intricate terrain of legislation related to assisted dying.

Islamic rulings allow for the forgoing of medical care under specific circumstances, distinguishing between life support and ancillary interventions. We emphasise the importance of a nuanced approach, granting flexibility to clinicians in assessing treatment futility. Decisions on withholding or withdrawing medical care are guided by conditions justifying these actions, such as terminal or inevitable death.

Regarding pain control in palliative care, Islamic rulings advocate endurance for non-terminal patients experiencing severe pain. However, during the final stage of illness, severe pain becomes an acceptable indication for withholding or discontinuing care. In these instances, the emphasis should be on pain relief medication and methods to ease the patient's suffering.

In conclusion, I extend my gratitude for the opportunity to share the Islamic perspective on assisted dying. Your thoughtful consideration of these insights is paramount as the Committee navigates this complex ethical terrain. I believe that by embracing diversity in perspectives, we can collectively arrive at solutions that uphold the sanctity of life and ensure compassionate end-of-life care.

Thank you for your time, attention, and commitment to understanding the nuanced considerations surrounding assisted dying.

Shukran, Go raibh maith agaibh.