

Czechs condemn euthanasia proposal for children (Update)

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A senior university lecturer and Czech government adviser has been forced to resign for proposing to legalize euthanasia for children born with birth defects, officials said Friday.

Miroslav Mitloehner drew strong protests after he argued in a recent article published in the Journal of Medical Law and Bioethics that "it makes no sense to prolong the life of a baby born as a monster."

Mitloehner said doctors should be allowed to terminate babies' lives without parents' consent, adding that their disabilities led to the question "whether such a freak is a human being at all."

Mitloehner said society should have the courage to agree to "legally end their life in the course of pregnancy or immediately after the birth."

Vaclav Krasa, the chairman of a major organization of the disabled, compared the views to "Nazi thinking."

Krasa said his Czech National Disability Council was shocked by the article and said "it is absolutely unacceptable to use the term 'freak' for human beings born with defects."

The University of Hradec Kralove where Mitloehner was the director of the Institute of Social Work said Friday he was fired from the post, while the Labor Ministry dismissed him from its scientific council.

"I don't say that someone should be killed. What I say in the article is that we should not support life functions when it's clear from the beginning that it will lead to nothing good." the 78-year-old Mitloehner told Czech public radio.

Meanwhile, the scientific journal said it had since discovered that Mitloehner published the same article in a different journal in 1986 and it would not publish him anymore.

Calls to Mitloehner went unanswered.

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