

# French court orders doctors to rule in right-to-die case

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A French court ordered doctors Thursday to decide whether a patient in a vegetative state should be allowed to die after years of legal battles that have torn his family apart.

Vincent Lambert, 39, was left severely brain damaged and quadriplegic as a result of a 2008 road accident, but has been kept alive through artificial nutrition and hydration.

Lambert has become the centre of a labyrinthine judicial battle that has gone all the way to the European rights court and ignited a heated debate over euthanasia in France.

In the latest court ruling, the [doctors](#) caring for Lambert were ordered to resume consultations with medical experts and come to a decision over his fate.

The decision "only means that the collaborative process must resume (but) without bias as to the outcome," the court said in a statement.

The legal drama began in January 2014, when Lambert's doctors, backed by his wife Rachel and six of his eight siblings, decided to stop his nutrition and hydration in line with France's passive euthanasia law, enacted in 2005.

However, his deeply devout Catholic parents, half-brother and sister won an urgent court application to stop the plan.

In an appeal, the French supreme administrative [court](#), known as the State Council, ordered three doctors to draw up a report on Lambert's condition and in June ruled that the decision to withdraw care from a man with no hope of recovery was lawful.

Lambert's parents then took the case to the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which ruled last year that he should be allowed to die.

This meant the final decision was up to his medical team.

However Lambert's doctors refused to take a final [decision](#) over fears for their security in a case which has enraged pro-life activists.

Active euthanasia, by which a person deliberately causes the patient's death, remains illegal in France despite recent efforts to ease legislation dealing with the terminally ill—a campaign promise by President Francois Hollande.

In March last year, lawmakers voted overwhelmingly in favour of a law allowing medics to place [terminally ill patients](#) in a deep sleep until they die.

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