

Doctor plans to withdraw life support in French right-to-die case

May 12 2019

The doctor of a Frenchman whose family has kept him alive in a vegetative state for a decade has informed them that he plans to take the patient off life support this month, lawyers said Saturday.

Vincent Lambert, 42, was left a tetraplegic after a [car accident](#) in 2008, with doctors later determining his [severe brain damage](#) was irreversible.

Lawyers for Lambert's parents, who are fighting to keep him alive, told AFP the doctor "would carry out his decision... sometime during the week of May 20."

A French court backed the doctor's decision early this year, a ruling upheld last month by France's State Council which decides on the validity of laws and legal decisions.

The case has bitterly divided Lambert's family during years of lawsuits and appeals.

In 2014, doctors backed by Lambert's wife Rachel, five of his siblings and his nephew Francois, decided to stop his feed and water in line with France's passive euthanasia law.

But his parents, practicing Catholics, and his half-brother and sister have fought the decision, saying Lambert's condition could improve with better treatment.

Last week, the UN's committee on disabled rights asked France to suspend any [decision](#) on Lambert's fate while it studied the case.

France's Health Minister Agnes Buzyn said France would answer the committee but was not under any legal requirement to abide by its request.

The European Court of Human Rights has rejected a similar appeal by Lambert's parents.

French law allows so-called "passive euthanasia" for seriously ill or injured patients with no chance of recovery, in which the means for keeping someone alive are cut off.

Active euthanasia, by which a person deliberately causes a patient's death, is illegal in France despite recent efforts to ease legislation dealing with the terminally ill.

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Citation: Doctor plans to withdraw life support in French right-to-die case (2019, May 12)
retrieved 18 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-05-doctor-life-french-right-to-die-case.html>

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