End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Muslim Council of Scotland

This submission is mainly concerned with refuting the principle of the Bill and thus does not deal with the proceedings. The statements below are views expressed by those consulted in the community, including faith leaders, medical persons are

The Moral Principle and Sanctity of LIFE

There are moral values for Muslims that do not change because they are grounded in teachings of God. The Islamic Laws are based on the protection of the life, faith, family, wealth and honour (dignity).

Life is the greatest gift from God and to tamper with it or interfere to end it is the most serious sin and an act of ingratitude against the creator. This applies whether it is the person’s own life or someone else’s life. God has given life and it is not for physicians, or others, to end a person's life early. Here are some quotations from Islamic Traditions:

- Do not take a life, which God made sacred.
- If anyone kills a person it would be as if he killed the whole of humanity. Of course the exception is when law is applied by state for crimes or defending the state.
- God decides how long each of us will live. When their time comes they cannot delay it for a single hour nor can they bring it forward by a single hour.
- Do not put yourself in destructive situations.
- A person man who got a wound, and growing impatient (with its pain), he took a knife and cut his hand with it and the blood did not stop till he died. God said, 'My servant hurried to bring death upon himself so I will deny him my Paradise.

What about Suffering and Care:

- The concept of a life not worthy of living does not exist in Islam.
- Suffering physically is not everything, spiritual suffering is the more serious, and is can only be relieved by strong faith in God and support from community around.
- The idea of life being intolerable, is not right when we believe that God does not burden a soul with a load that is beyond its ability and God is the only one who knows it.
- As a society it is our responsibility and duty to care for each other, especially the old, infirm, sick etc. It is a duty to lend care with love to
those of kin and neighbours. Care and high respect for parents in old age are strongly emphasised.

- This care is the real measure of the civilised human society. The opposite is to treat human beings as machines which is to be scraped when it does not function properly or as good as a new one.
- Believers accept physical suffering as part of life trials and a way to gain forgiveness for their bad deeds, however this does not mean to ask for suffering.
- It is also an opportunity for the carers to offer charitable deeds to bring them nearer to God.
- With spiritual care and physical care especially with the progress made in palliative care, together should make life tolerable.
- Spiritual care means all the love and emotional attachment given by the family and society at large by ensuring that as far as possible they suffer as little as possible without showing them that they are a burden on the society and even think of depriving them of life.
- This care will ensure the real dignity of death before and when it comes, without interference to end life.
- Assistance in any form to end life will destroy the relation between patient and medical staff, in addition to society as a whole.
- Majority of medical staff are opposed to physician assisted suicide on principle. Also, it is incompatible for those directly involved in the care of the dying to also be involved in assisted end of life.
- This Bill would have a detrimental effect on society’s respect for human life, would damage the doctor-patient relationship, would be difficult to administer without widespread abuse and would lead to a devaluing of the lives of people with disabilities and those in extreme old age.

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