

## **Christianity and Islamic Position on Euthanasia: The Nigeria Perspective** **By**

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### **Abstract**

In recent times, the concept of euthanasia has come increasingly under the spotlight due to the on-going technicization of medicine. Several other compounding factors are making the issue of euthanasia a pressing problem for contemporary society, defies on the infinite value God places upon each human being. First, there has been a shift in the perception and understanding of death; death, being technicized and depersonalized, is no longer a natural event at all particularly in Western societies. Human rights have become a cornerstone of modern medicine. This paper examines the religious implication of this act as it tends to oppose, disregard and trivialize the value and sanctity of human life. In response, three European countries have legalized both physician-assisted suicide and active euthanasia and the U.S states of Oregon and Washington have passed legislation regulating physician - assisted suicide. Drawing on the experience of these countries, it would be meaningful to examine how such proposals will affect Nigeria going by a shrewd call by the minority of her population to legalize the practice in Nigeria. This study points out

the positions of Christianity and Islam on euthanasia, which the two Holy Books condemn in totality any form of human assisted death, whether by the patient or the physician. This paper considered the definition and classification of euthanasia examine the historical evolution of the concept in Nigeria, Christian and Muslim position, the legal position of the practice in Nigeria. The study recommended that, life is sacred and should be treated with dignity; no one has the right to take it.

**Key Words: Euthanasia, Ethic of Euthanasia, Religious Position.**

### **Introduction**

While in the past the concept of human dignity was the sole focus in defining the person, today it is understood as a foundational value and used to explain other ethical concepts, such as freedom, responsibility, and solidarity. If we observe the development of applied ethics in biology, medicine, social life, economic reality, family life, etc., the concept of human dignity always appears when we address the question of the foundation and formulation of norms. The most striking example of the disconnect between the foundational and comprehensive expectations of the concept of human dignity and its actual lack of content. This is not the place to trace a history of human rights, however. The decades that separate us from the 1948 have certainly provided many occasions for reflection and analysis concerning both the problem of the theoretical foundation for these rights and the historical conditions in which they are recognized, cultivated, and practiced or where, instead, they are trampled underfoot and violated.

### **Definition of Ethics and Euthanasia Ethics**

Etymologically, Ozumba sees ethics as a term, which comes from the Greek word "ethos" which means "customary, (29)." Looking at what the definition above in tell, we can say that ethics is an equivalent to morals or morality, which primarily deals with right or wrong of a thing. Univocal definition of ethics is not possible. Uduigwomen and Omoregbe also in the the same vine buttressing with the above scholars, carefully observed that ethics has no univocal definition, but various ways is what the paper shall consider in this part of the work, (165).

To Lacey, ethics is the study of whether there are any values every person should pursue, whether a set of virtues as a code of principles of conduct is for everyone and what these are if they do exist. It is rather morally heard to justify letting somebody die a slow and ugly death just in the name of a set of conduct, dehumanized, than it is to justify helping him to escape from such misery, (45). This is the case at least in any code of ethics which is humanistic or personalistic, i.e. in any code of ethics which has a value system that puts humanness and personal integrity above biological life and function. It makes no difference whether such an ethics system is grounded in a theistic or a naturalistic philosophy. We may believe that God wills human happiness or that man's happiness is, as Protagoras thought, a self-validating standard of the good and the right. But what counts *ethically* is whether human needs come first—not whether the ultimate sanction is transcendental or secular.

### **Euthanasia**

Definition of Euthanasia According to Encyclopedia Britannica, euthanasia is the act or practice of painlessly putting to death persons suffering from painful and incurable diseases or incapacitating physical disorder. Etymologically, the word is a derivative of two Greek words 'Euthukos' which means 'good cheer', 'courage' or 'cheerful' and 'thanatos' which means 'death'. Euthanasia therefore implies painless termination of the life of a person who is suffering from an incurable, painful or distressful disease or handicaps. In the words of Black's law Dictionary, euthanasia means "the act or practice of painlessly putting to death persons suffering from incurable and stressing disease as an act of mercy" (<https://Encyclopedia Britannica>). The term normally implies an intentional termination of life by another at the explicit request of the person who wishes to die.

To some scholars, euthanasia is the intentional premature termination of another person's life, either by direct intervention (active euthanasia) or by withholding life-prolonging measures and resources (passive euthanasia), either at the express or implied request of that person (voluntary euthanasia), or in the absence of such approval (non-voluntary euthanasia). From a legal angle, Bamgbose views euthanasia as the taking of human life by another or with the assistance of another, (45). It is pertinent to state here that there is no controversy as to the origin of the

word euthanasia, just as the dictionaries afore-mentioned; almost all the authors and writers trace their definitions to ancient Greek. Euthanasia is therefore; generally defined as the act of killing an incurably ill person out of concern and compassion for that person's suffering. It is sometimes called mercy killing, but many advocates of euthanasia define mercy killing more precisely as the ending of another's life without his or her request, (<https://Encyclopedia Britannica>).

### **The History of Euthanasia**

A basic knowledge of the history of the movement to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide the so-called "right to die" movement is essential for anyone who hopes to defeat the evil of imposed death. Debates about the ethics of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide date from ancient Greece and Rome. In the 4th Century BC, the Hippocratic Oath was written by Hippocrates, the father of medicine. For 2400 years, physicians made these solemn promises. Until very recently (the last 30 years or so) the Hippocratic Oath was taken by all new physicians. It was a rite of passage. In the late 20th century, several European countries had special provisions in their criminal codes for lenient sentencing and the consideration of extenuating circumstances in prosecutions for euthanasia. The opinion that euthanasia is morally permissible is traceable to Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/plato>). It is rejected in traditional Christian belief, chiefly because it is thought to contravene the prohibition of murder in the Ten Commandments. The organized movement for legalization of euthanasia commenced in England in 1935, when C. Killick Millard founded the Voluntary Euthanasia Legalisation Society (later called the Euthanasia Society). The society's bill was defeated in the House of Lords in 1936, as was a motion on the same subject in the House of Lords in 1950. In the United States the Euthanasia Society of America was founded in 1938, (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/houseoflord>)

The first countries to legalize euthanasia were the Netherlands in 2001, Belgium in 2002, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Estonia, in 1997 Oregon became the first state in the United States to decriminalize physician-assisted suicide; opponents of the controversial law, however, attempted to have it overturned. In 2009 the Supreme Court of South Korea recognized a "right to die with dignity" in its decision to

approve a request by the family of a brain-dead woman that she be removed from life-support systems, (<https://www.britannica.com/pace/thenetherlans>).

The potential of modern medical practice to prolong life through technological means has provoked the question of what courses of action should be available to the physician and the family in cases of extreme physical or emotional suffering, especially if the patient is incapable of choice. Passively doing nothing to prolong life or withdrawing life-support measures has resulted in criminal charges being brought against physicians; on the other hand, the families of comatose and terminal patients have instituted legal action against the medical establishment to make them stop the use of extraordinary life support.

### **Classification of Euthanasia**

According to Iyaniwura, euthanasia can be categorized under six headings. They include: voluntary euthanasia; involuntary euthanasia; active euthanasia; passive euthanasia; physician-assisted suicide; and non-voluntary euthanasia.

- (a) Voluntary Euthanasia: In this case, the patient must have made an explicit request that his life be terminated, either because the patient is suffering unbearable pain or is terminally ill. To qualify as voluntary euthanasia, the request must not emanate from the patient's relations or carers (Iyaniwura, 204).
- (b) Involuntary Euthanasia: Here, the person who is to die does not take the decision about death. The decision is taken by this family, friends or even the physician treating him. Such cases, according to Unduigwomen occur where the patient suffers from brain damage or serious brain hemorrhage and there is no hope of recovery. Another person makes an informed consent on his behalf, (83).
- (c) Active Euthanasia: This refers to causing death of a patient by a direct and positive response to the request of the suffering individual. Robinson (2000) illustrated this with the mercy killing, in 1998, of a patient suffering from ALS (Lon Gellin's Disease) by Dr. Jack Kervokian, a Michigan physician. Dr. Kerrokian injected lethal substance into the patient who was scared of the prospect of an agonizing death and desired a painless exit.

Dr. Kervokian was later convicted of second degree murder, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

- (d) **Passive Euthanasia:** Gifford (1993) describes passive euthanasia as “allowing a patient to die by removing (him) from artificial life support systems such as respirators and feeding tubes or simply discontinuing medical treatments necessary to sustain life”. A good example is the case of Terri Schiavo mentioned earlier.
- (e) **Physician Assisted Suicide:** This occurs where a physician supplies information and /or dose of sleeping pills or carbon monoxide gas. It is then left to the patient to administer it on himself. Robinson (2000) referred to this as voluntary passive euthanasia.

### **Euthanasia in Nigeria**

The practice of euthanasia and assisted suicide can be said to be denuded of any history in Nigeria. What may however be said to be something similar to non-voluntary euthanasia was practised by the beleaguered Nupe in the present Niger State. This practice was not limited to them alone; it also extended to all other ethnic groups who were involved in inter and intra tribal wars of the 19th and 20th centuries. The nature of this non-voluntary euthanasia was the killing of infants. These infants were usually exposed by their parents as a way of running for cover to avoid being caught by the enemies (Uduigwomen, 78). Because lots of things happened during wars, the children usually cry endlessly, largely due to illnesses and hunger. These cries may attract the enemies to know the hiding place of their allies. So as a way of avoiding being caught, they will abandon the children. This is so because the wailings of the babies could attract enemies to their place. To therefore avoid being caught by the enemies, babies will be abandoned while they too scurry to hide. Thus after being bitten by rain, sunshine, infections and most importantly hunger, many of them died. What may be viewed as the present day euthanasia can also be related to the old practices in the present southeastern part of the country, wherein the custom and tradition of the people permits killing of twins. It was seen as abomination for a woman to give birth to two set of children at a blow. Ozumba opine that, the custom made it compulsory for the parents of such baby twins to kill them immediately or sooner after their birth, and throw them at the evil forest (67). However, what should call to our mind is the manner such infants were killed. It could be noted that some parents had the mind or

morale to physically kill those children by either strangling them to death or stopping their breath. Some who could not have such mind looked for certain herbal concoction which they either prepared themselves, or obtained from a herbalist and administer such poisonous locally-made substance orally to the newly born twins, which would incidentally lead to their death.

Apart from these instances, euthanasia and assisted suicide have no place in Nigeria because like every typical African customary laws, suicide and deliberate killing of the one who is ill is a taboo and an abomination in the country, (Ozumba 79).

Thus it can be said that euthanasia and or assisted suicide is illegal in Nigeria. This illegal status is however not as a result of any special legislation, but as based on existing laws which do not specifically provide for euthanasia and assisted suicide. 51 As started from the ancient time, across the countries and jurisdictions that have legalized same till date, debates on same are already on. A school of thought may believe that a call for legislation at this stage is premature, since agitation on the issue is yet to begin.

### **Euthanasia and the Nigerian Constitution**

The penal laws in Nigeria are governed by statute. Under the Penal Code 52 applicable in Northern Nigeria, and Criminal Code 53 applicable in Southern Nigeria, consent of a person to an act causing death is not a defence. The term euthanasia is not used in the penal laws in Nigeria, but an inference to that effect is provided for. The killing of a human being by another is a crime under homicide, amounting to murder or manslaughter, depending on the intent with which the killing is done. The penal laws do not distinguish between a killing that is carried out with the assistance of a physician or a request emanating from a patient or the state of the patient's health. The effect is that euthanasia is murder.

### **There is a cultural dimension to the issue of euthanasia in Nigeria.**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with a diverse culture Law is organic and functional in human societies; however, it functions differently from one society to the other. Under some Nigerian cultures and from a sociological perspective, euthanasia or suicide has not been recognized as a viable option. A proverbial



saying in Igbo has it that *mkpomkpo ndu kaonwu mma*. Interpreted, it means the worst health is better than death (Shittu 6). In some occasions, patients who are terminally ill and in an intolerable situation because of physical or mental incapacity will not wish to remain in a deplorable condition that will bring about shame and pity from a cultural perspective. Moreover, family members, out of pity, may not wish to see the patient in agony. With the statutory penal laws in place, however, any act of terminating such patient's life would be regarded as murder.

In respect of assisted dying/suicide, the position of the law is clear. Section 326(3) of Criminal Code Act 56 provides that 'any person who aids another in killing himself is guilty of felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life.' The syllogism here is that consent by a person to the causing of his death does not affect the criminal responsibility of any person by whom such death is caused (Shittu 7). In *State v. Okezie*, the accused, a native doctor, prepared some charms for the deceased. The deceased then invited the accused to test the charm on him by firing a shot at him. The accused shot him in the chest and killed him. He was convicted of murder. It is a criminal offence attracting life imprisonment for aiding someone to commit suicide in Nigeria.

### **Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide and the 1999 constitution of Nigeria**

It is pedestrian that under the legal regime in Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is supreme and its provisions shall prevail. Where any other law is inconsistent with the constitution, to the extent of that inconsistency, that other law(s) shall be void, (Adaramola 67)

A key component of the constitution is enshrined in chapter IV of the constitution. Under this chapter, elaborate provisions relating to the recognition and protection of basic fundamental Human rights are contained. According to Augustine Alegeh SAN, former National President, Nigerian Bar Association "Perhaps the greatest gift of mankind as far as law is concerned is the evolution of Fundamental Human Rights as inalienable rights." Therefore, in line with global best practice, and the country's treaty obligations, the constitution of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) contains fundamental human rights provisions. Some of these provisions have direct bearing on the law and practice of Euthanasia and assisted suicide.



These provisions include the right to life, human dignity, liberty, privacy, freedom of thought, conscience and religion freedom from discrimination, torture, human or degrading treatment etc. Accordingly under the constitution, the right to life is guaranteed (Adaramola 69). Under this section, every person has a right to life and therefore no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria. For this paper, specific mention shall be made to the following: right to human dignity under which there is no such right by any citizen either constitutionally or culturally the is permitted to take or assist one to die.

### **The Biblical Position on euthanasia and physician assisted suicide**

For centuries, physicians have adhered to the sentiment as described by the Hippocratic Oath. One of the clauses included in the historic commitment is this: "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect." Those who subscribe to the oath promise to refrain from participating in two actions now known as euthanasia and physician assisted suicide, (Wurster 2018).

The Bible teaches that suffering is not necessarily something that should be avoided at all costs. Romans 5:3 teaches us to "rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance." Similarly, James teaches this: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

For most people, including Christians, rejoicing in our sufferings is not easy. A dying person screaming in pain or weeping in loneliness in a hospital bed does not want to be told to be joyful in his suffering; and indeed, he generally shouldn't be. But Christian ethicist Gilbert Meilaender said, "We should maximize care rather than minimizing suffering, which might include eliminating the sufferer." Likewise, the authors of *Always to Care, Never to Kill* in the journal *First Things* concluded, "Although it may sometimes appear to be an act of compassion, killing is never a means of caring." Inspired by Meilaender and the authors of *Always to Care, Never to Kill*, Stephen Phillips, an Indiana professor and physician once thoughtfully suggested that sometimes, true care is holding

someone's hand and suffering right alongside him. It is not taking his life or suggesting that he take his own, Mercy killing ([https://erlc./multi\\_author/marywurster](https://erlc./multi_author/marywurster)).

### **Freedom of choice**

Others in favor of euthanasia and cite personal autonomy and freedom of choice. Everyone, they argue, has a right to die when and how they choose, and in fact, human dignity includes this. But consider the words of Job: "A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed" (Job 14:5). Euthanasia and PAS "assert a desire to be infinite" and reject a dependence on God, the author of life and controller of death. Therefore, there must be no difference between any of these actions. This, however, is simply not the case. Allowing to die involves withholding treatment without an intent to cause death. This is a form of beneficence, or preventing harm to a person. Examples might include removing a ventilator from a grandmother with no hope of recovery, or choosing to refrain from potentially fruitless chemotherapy. The authors of *Always to Care, Never to Kill* explain it like this: "It is permitted to refuse or withhold medical treatment in accepting death while we continue to care for the dying. It is never permitted . . . to take any action that is aimed at the death of ourselves or others."

God commands, "You must not murder" (Ex. 20:13). Jesus also commands us, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Allowing someone to die by withholding treatment may combine these two sentiments, because the intention is to care for a person in the best way possible, rather than to cause death. "So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Human beings are created in the *Imago Dei* (the Image of God). This alone gives us inherent dignity and a value to our lives. At some point, determining that our lives are not worth living fundamentally rejects this dignity.

### **Position of Islam on Sanctity of life**

Human Life is sacred and very valuable in Islam; as sanctity of human life is a basic concept in Islam. One of the basic beliefs in Islam is that GOD (ALLAH) is the Creator of all of mankind and the Real Owner of all lives. He created Adam

from mud and He gave him life and He is the One who started our lives from conception. Therefore, He is the only One who will end it through natural death at a predetermined time. The moment of death of every creature on this earth is predetermined only by the Creator and only He knows when this time will come. There are many verses in the holy Quran and Sunnah [words and actions of Prophet Mohammad that emphasize these core believes of Islam (Katme, 2013). For example, the following versus from Quran reflect the sanctity of human life in Islam; "We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Chapter 5, verse 32). "Do not kill yourselves, for verily Allah has been to you most merciful" (Chapter 4, verse 29). "....take not life which Allah has made sacred" (Chapter 6, verse 151).

Furthermore, sanctity and value of Muslims' lives were reflected in Prophet Mohammad's words as he mentioned that "Demolishing the Kaaba (the holiest place to Muslims at Mecca where they do pilgrimage) completely is much more preferred to Allah Almighty than shedding the blood of a Believing Muslim" (Words of Prophet Mohammad, 2013)

On the other hand, many verses in the holy Quran emphasize that our lives will end at a fixed, predetermined time that that only God know and we don't know, (Adebayo 12).

"It is not given to any soul to die, but with the permission of Allah at an appointed time" (Chapter 3, verse 145). "And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term" (Chapter 3, verse 145). These two notions (sanctity of life and that life will end at a time that is predetermined by God) are two basic believes in Islam that we will make the base to judge end of life decisions.

### **Islamic Code of Medical Ethics:**

The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics, issued by the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine held in Kuwait, in 1981, states: "In his/her defense of life, however, the doctor is well advised to realize his limit and not transgress it. If it is scientifically certain that life cannot be restored, then it is futile to diligently keep

the patient in a vegetative state by heroic means or to preserve the patient by deep freezing or other artificial methods. It is the process of life that the doctor aims to maintain and not the process of dying. In any case, the doctor shall not take a positive measure to terminate the patient's life"(Duala 83). Two articles of "The Islamic Code for Medical and Health Ethics" are devoted to the Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Death. Article sixty one: "Human life is sacred, and it should never be wasted except in the cases specified by shari'a and the law.

This is a question that lies completely outside the scope of the medical profession. A physician should not take an active part in terminating the life of a patient, even if it is at his or her guardian's request, and even if the reason is severe deformity; a hopeless, incurable disease; or severe, unbearable pain that cannot be alleviated by the usual pain killers. The physician should urge his patient to endure and remind him of the reward of those who tolerate their suffering. This particularly applies to the following cases of what is known as mercy killing: a. the deliberate killing of a person who voluntarily asks for his life to be ended; b. physician-assisted suicide; and c. the deliberate killing of newly born infants with deformities that may or may not threaten their lives.

The body that God gives an individual is not a personal possession. No one is free to dispose of their body as they wish because it is a trust for which they will be held accountable by the Creator (Glory to Him) on the Day of Judgment. In the Quran, God says:

"And do not throw yourselves to destruction and be good for God loves the good ones" (2:195).

A patient who asks his physician to end his life in one way or another is considered committing suicide (may God protect us). In their collections of authentic hadiths, al-Bukhari and Muslim related through Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of God said:

Whoever hurls himself off a mountain and kills himself will be [repeatedly] hurled into the flames of Hellfire, where he will abide eternally. Whoever drinks poison and kills himself, will be in the Hellfire eternally; his poison will be in his hand and he will drink

from it. Whoever kills himself with an iron blade, the blade will be in his hands and he will stab himself in the stomach in Hellfire eternally (al-Bukhari 67).

As for a physician terminating the life of a patient for a reason he deems justifiable, it is – may God protect us! – the unlawful taking of human life. Our Lord, all praise to Him says:

Whoever kills a believer deliberately, the punishment for him is hell, and there he will remain: God is angry with him, and rejects him, and has prepared a tremendous torment for him (Quran 4:93), (Adaramola 61).

To this end, human life per se is a value to be respected unconditionally. The concept of a life not worth living does not exist in Islam. Justification of taking life to escape suffering is not acceptable in Islam. The Prophet Mohammad said: “Among the nations before you there was a 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 until he died. Allah said, ‘My slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him to enter Paradise’” (Qur’an 4:29). During one of the military campaigns one of the Muslims was killed and the companions of the prophet kept praising his gallantry and efficiency in fighting, but, to their surprise, the Prophet commented, “His lot is hell.” Upon inquiry, the companions found out that the man had been seriously injured so he supported the handle of his sword on the ground and plunged his chest onto its tip, committing suicide. Patience and endurance are highly regarded and highly rewarded values in Islam. “Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure” (Qur’an 39:10). “And bear in patience whatever ill maybe fall you: this, behold, is something to set one’s heart upon” (Qur’an 31:17). When means of preventing or alleviating pain fall short, this spiritual dimension can be very effectively called upon to support the patient who believes that accepting and standing unavoidable pain will be to his/her credit in the hereafter, the real and enduring life.

### **Current Arguments Concerning Euthanasia**

Bangbose present that, the key arguments for and against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Apart from the above perspectives, key arguments by the

proponents and opponents of euthanasia and assisted suicide can be compressed into the following:

### **Arguments for Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide**

- a) It is an act of compassion.
- b) It provides relief in cases of extreme pain and anguish, particularly for the terminally ill when all hopes of survival is lost.
- c) It is an expression of the freedom to choose or self-determination inherent in all individuals, recognized by nature and God.
- d) It preserves as well as promotes bodily integrity and dignity for the terminally ill or incapacitated.
- e) It frees up scarce medical facilities and funds to assist other people who are less ill, with clear chance of survival.

### **Arguments against Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide**

- (a) Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide represent an attempt by man to play God.
- (b) It devalues human life i.e. degrade the sanctity of human life.
- (c) It can easily become a selfish and short cut means of health care cost containment
- (d) It is an act of cruelty, rather than an act of compassion
- (e) It is against natural laws of human relations
- (f) In the case of physicians, it is against the Hippocratic oath
- (g) There exists a “slippery slope” effect that can occur where there is a legalization of euthanasia/assisted suicide (112).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It has been observed that the impression that all forms of euthanasia are criminalized in Nigeria is not the truth, as the Supreme Court’s decision in Okonkwo’s case 87 impliedly approved passive euthanasia. The prohibition of all forms of killing (euthanasia inclusive) by both the Penal Code and Criminal Code, and approval of passive euthanasia vide Supreme Court judgment amount to double jeopardy, which may lead to legal tsunami in Nigerian jurisprudence. It is equally observed that the reason for criminalization of euthanasia and or assisted suicide (though not expressly stated) under the Nigerian criminal law is not far from cultural perspectives of Nigerians on the sanctity of human life. Further, the

disadvantageous aspect of legalizing or decriminalization of euthanasia in Nigeria through legislation will outweigh its advantages. There is also high probability of emergency of slippery slope in the practical aspect of the law, were it enacted in Nigeria.

Given the foregoing it is recommended that the Nigeria government especially the judicial and legislative organs should take a bold stance on how to address what amounts to double standards in the existing laws governing euthanasia practice in the country. As it stands now, no one can surely say whether or not passive euthanasia is a crime under the Nigerian law. This is because the National Assembly has the power in the course of making law to nullify or abrogate decisions of any court of law, including that of Supreme Court (being a common law), and once that is done, that particular decision of the court will no more have the force of law, and court of law cannot question the vires of the legislature to nullify or abrogate the common law.

There is an urgent need for Nigerian Government to enact a specific law, guiding or governing the euthanasia/assisted suicide. Going by the modern trend in medical technology, the issue of euthanasia has become a global trend which requires a specific law to either expressly criminalize or decriminalize the practice. The taciturnity of the Nigerian law on the subject has become overdue, hence the need for a specific legislation on that aspect.

Nigerian authorities should not bend only in criminalizing euthanasia via its criminal law. They should also do well in providing an alternative treatment or care centres such as hospice care, palliative care, and other medical centers for the management of terminally ill patients. They should make the services of such centers either free of charge or affordable within the reach of every citizen of Nigeria suffering pain as a result of terminal sickness. This, when done is believed to achieve much results rather than criminalizing it. Even if such practice is criminalized without adequate hospice care or other life care services, the law will not be effective; people will go ahead doing “their thing” underground.

There is also a need for value orientation among Nigerians about their steadfastness in upholding their cultural perspectives on the sanctity of life. They



should not allow western civilization to make them jettison their cultural value in this aspect. To achieve this goal, the press, mass media, and other social networks have a pivotal role to play. Moreover, seminars and workshops should be always organized to enable our citizenry uphold the doctrine of sanctity of life enshrined in the Nigeria constitution.

Finally, it should be advised that the pleas of the terminally ill patients, who sometimes request death, should not be understood as implying a true desire for euthanasia, but an anguished plea for help and love. Because of this it is suggested that we should always show this people love and care, rather than canvass for their death via euthanasia. Life is a precious gift from God, which is sacred and should always be treated as such.

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