

**PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE: June 2014**

**Supreme Court ruling is good news for the vulnerable, but dangers lie ahead**

LIFE, the national pro-life caring and educational charity, has given a cautious welcome to the Supreme Court's refusal today to decriminalise assisted suicide in the UK.

This ruling must be a relief to the thousands of vulnerable people who would be at risk with the legalisation of assisted suicide. Any court decision that upholds the legal ban on ending the lives of vulnerable people is to be welcomed. However, we are concerned by the remarks in this ruling suggesting that judges in future assisted suicide cases may be able to make sweeping changes to the law.

We have great sympathy with all those who are suffering, including the Nicklinson family, Paul Lamb and "Martin", the plaintiffs in this case. However, we must balance this sympathy with consideration of the likely consequences of legalised assisted suicide.

Once we have admitted into law the principle that some patients can be intentionally killed, it will be very difficult to control the spread of assisted suicide, even if we start from a position of very limited availability. This is because of the way that law, with its inexorable logic of precedent and equal treatment, works in practice. We should look, for instance, in the Netherlands, where in just a few short years assisted suicide has gone from being an option for a few people in very severe pain to being offered to teenagers with depression and people who have nothing physically wrong with them but are 'tired of life', and non-responsive patients who have not made any request to be killed. The movement towards widespread legal assisted suicide in Holland began with a small number of individual hard cases that came before the courts. Proposals for assisted suicide are opposed by almost all the major medical bodies, and by groups which promote the rights of people with disabilities and the elderly, e.g. the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Physicians, Scope, Help The Aged and the Disability Rights Commission. In general, the vulnerable and those who directly care for the vulnerable do not want assisted suicide.

We must ask ourselves what the consequences of assisted suicide would be for the vulnerable. Do we really wish to create a medical and legal culture where it becomes normal to view killing as the response to disability and suffering and the difficulties of old age? The law must be there to protect people, not leave them at risk of harm as will be the case if assisted suicide is allowed. It is with this in mind that we hope that any future case of this nature is also rejected by the courts.

**END**

**For further media comment please call the LIFE Media Hotline on 07867 744502**

**LIFE is a pro-life charity that supports anyone facing a crisis pregnancy, pregnancy loss or after an abortion, and strives to engage, inspire and inform the next generation.**