

UK man who failed to overturn euthanasia law dies

August 22 2012, by MARIA CHENG



In this family photo released in Jan. 2012 by Tony and Jane Nicklinson, former corporate manager, rugby player, skydiving sports enthusiast Tony Nicklinson sits at his home in Wiltshire, England, where following a stroke he suffers from locked-in syndrome. The High Court in London has rejected an attempt by Tony Nicklinson suffering from locked-in syndrome to overturn Britain's euthanasia law by refusing to legally allow doctors to end his life. (AP Photo/Tony and Jane Nicklinson)

(AP) — Tony Nicklinson, paralyzed and unable to speak, found life so unbearable he wanted to die. On Wednesday, the 58-year-old Briton got his wish.

His family said he died of pneumonia at home.

In January, Nicklinson asked the High Court to declare that any doctor who killed him with his consent would not be charged with murder. Last week, the court rejected his request, a decision that Nicklinson said had left him "devastated and heartbroken."

Nicklinson was a former corporate manager and rugby player who suffered a stroke in 2005 that left him with locked-in syndrome. He was unable to speak or move below his neck and required constant care. Nicklinson communicated mostly by blinking, although his mind had remained unaffected and his condition was not terminal.

Nicklinson had argued that British law violated his right to "private and family life" as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, on the ground that being able to choose how to die is a matter of personal autonomy. He had previously described his life as "a living nightmare."

One of his daughters said on Twitter that before he died, Nicklinson had asked them to tweet "Goodbye world the time has come, I had some fun."

Police said they would not be investigating Nicklinson's death. "We can confirm he passed away," a police spokesman said on customary condition of anonymity. "His death certificate has been signed by a doctor, so it is not a matter for Wiltshire Police or the coroner."

Saimo Chahal, Nicklinson's lawyer, said his health had deteriorated over the week-end after he caught pneumonia. Nicklinson had legal documents drawn up in 2004 to refuse any life-saving treatment. He had also been refusing food since last week.

Nicklinson had said that even if he were granted the right to die, he would not want to be killed immediately, but just wanted to know that

the option existed.

Experts weren't sure what impact, if any, his death might have on the ongoing euthanasia debate in Britain.

Penney Lewis, a law professor at King's College London, said previous deaths of euthanasia advocates didn't have any effect on changing laws to allow the practice.

"The evidence seems to be that parliaments are not galvanized into action by the deaths of those who have been fighting for (euthanasia) legalization," she said in an email. Nicklinson "was so distressed by the High Court decision, it is sad to think he died while still absorbing that."

In Europe, only Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands allow [euthanasia](#). Switzerland allows assisted suicide and is the only country that helps foreigners die at a clinic near Zurich.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: UK man who failed to overturn euthanasia law dies (2012, August 22) retrieved 1 February 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-uk-overturn-euthanasia-law-dies.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--