



Feel You've "Completed" Your Life? You Can Die Now

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Last year, about 5,000 people ended their lives using Holland's End-of-Life clinics—about 4% of total deaths—and experts say the number is rising about 10% a year.

Holland is close to becoming the first country to **legalize** assisted suicide for those who feel they have “completed” their lives.

A **letter** to Parliament by Dutch health and justice ministers explained, “People who have a well-considered opinion that their life is complete, must, under strict and careful criteria, be allowed to finish that life in a manner dignified for them.”

The **new law**, currently being drafted by Dutch legislators, doctors and ethicists, will include strict procedural guidelines and safety mechanisms such as third-party checks, reviews and supervision done by “death assistance providers.”

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In 2002, Holland **became the first country** to legalize euthanasia for patients over the age of 18 suffering from intolerable physical pain and no hope of a cure. Within a few years, assisted suicide would be approved for mental diseases such as severe depression, addiction and dementia.

People who have recently chosen assisted suicide include an alcoholic who could no longer bear his life with the addiction; a woman in her 20s who had been sexually abused from ages five to 15 and suffered from anorexia, depression and hallucinations; a 22-year-old paralyzed from the neck down and almost blind; and a Dutch couple, both 91, who died peacefully holding hands (in the first double assisted suicide).

Some Dutch psychiatrists involved in approving the procedure for mentally ill patients **say** that doctors are still “too hesitant” to grant someone the right to die, and that when a patient's mental state is unbearable, it is immoral to deny the drugs needed to end suffering.

Opponents of assisted suicide **believe** that doctors have the moral responsibility to keep their patients alive at all costs, that it unfairly targets the disabled and that the elderly might choose an early death to relieve their spouses or children of a perceived burden.

I talked to my Dutch friend whose mother had died using assisted suicide. “She was in her own bed, safe and comfy, surrounded by love,” my friend explained. “My dad, my brothers and I all held her hand as she passed away. It was really beautiful.”

That's the way I want to go. Or maybe not. But for sure I'd like the option.

In the U.S., only **five states** — California, Colorado, Oregon, Vermont and Washington — have Death With Dignity laws that allow qualified, terminally-ill adults to choose how and when they will die.



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