Committee:  World Health Organization

Topic: Legalization of Euthanasia

Country: Japan

Delegation: Büşra İrem Çelik

Since the late twentieth century, movements to legalize euthanasia in Western countries have received growing coverage in the Japanese press. Who have tended to view it as an issue not impacting their own country. There are two religions in Japan, Shintoism and Buddhism. The Japanese have developed a sense of pride of their own, and this understanding is not strictly mistaken. Shintoists do not care about heaven, hell, death as religions teach people. The focus instead has been on songenshi, or “death with dignity.” In this understanding, the Japanese people would rather die than fail. Suicide as a result of failure is very common among Japanese people. Japan has the seventh highest suicide rate among 37 OECD member countries. According to the information reported by the Japan Times, the suicide rate in the country, which increased after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, peaked in 2003, exceeding 34 thousand cases. It is thought that the cultural approach has an effect on the fact that suicides occur more frequently in Japan compared to other countries. The topic of death is gaining attention in Japan. İn truth, it stems from practical concerns over the government’s ability to hold ballooning social security costs in check as the population rapidly ages.

Euthanasia is the act of deliberately ending the life of a person to relieve pain and suffering. In Japanese it is generally referred to as *anrakushi*, a somewhat ambiguous term that implies a “peaceful death.” While there is no official definition of *anrakushi* under Japanese law, it typically describes a doctor administering a lethal dose of medication to a patient directly (active euthanasia) or providing the patient with the medication and means to administer it on their own (physician-assisted suicide. Foremost, we need to clearly define what *anrakushi* is. The term has a comforting ring in Japanese—*anraku* literally means “comfort” and “ease”—but it candy coats what is essentially “mercy killing” to relieve pain and suffering of a such a degree that it makes life unbearable. The Japanese government has no official laws on the status of euthanasia and the Supreme Court of Japan has never ruled on the matter. Rather, to date, Japan's euthanasia policy has been decided by two local court cases, one in Nagoya in 1962, and another after an incident at Tokai University in 1995. The first case involved "passive euthanasia" ( allowing a patient to die by turning off life support) and the latter case involved "active euthanasia’’. Nevertheless, at present, there is a tentative legal framework for implementing euthanasia in Japan. Euthanasia is legal in Japan but only if four conditions are met: 1. The patient is suffering unbearable physical pain. 2. The patient’s death is unavoidable and imminent. 3. All possible palliative treatment and care to ease the patient’s physical pain and suffering have been provided and no other alternatives are available. 4. The patient has expressed a clear and voluntary desire to have his or her life shortened.

Humans naturally want to live with meaning, as contributing members of society, but when they lose that meaning and the value they have to add, they can fall into despair and hope for death. Then it is precisely because people want to live lives of value and meaning that they may want to die. Before the law goes into effect and euthanasia is legalized in Japan, it needs to be thoroughly determined whether people really suffer and choose death over life or death because of incurable diseases. Because according to the data, it is seen that the Japanese people are more likely to end their own lives for a dignified life compared to other countries and because of non-strict religious rules. Religion is the biggest factor preventing the legalization of euthanasia in other countries. But since there are no such strict rules in Japan, the Japanese goverment should prevent the abuse of this election as a result of the legalization of euthanasia.