

The Salvation Army

Positional Statement - Southern Africa Territory



Euthanasia

The Bible states that God is the creator, preserver and governor of all things¹ and that human life is a sacred gift of infinite value to be cherished, nurtured and redeemed². The Salvation Army recognises the anxieties surrounding living and dying in pain, loss of dignity and fears regarding the inappropriate extension of life. However, The Salvation Army believes that people do not have the right to death by their own decision, whether procured by their own act or by the commissioning of another. The Salvation Army believes that euthanasia and assisted suicide are inconsistent with Biblical principles, and undermine, rather than enhance human dignity.

The term “Euthanasia” is used to describe any action undertaken with the primary purpose of deliberately accelerating the death of another person, whether or not at that person’s request, in order to relieve distress and suffering. “Assisted suicide”, by definition, involves counselling, aiding or assisting someone with the intention of ending the life of the person being assisted.

The Salvation Army accepts that a patient’s next of kin is justified in agreeing to medical advice to remove life support systems where brain death has occurred. Euthanasia does not include withholding or withdrawing medical treatment which serves only to prolong the dying process.

We promote palliative and home based care as compassionate, comprehensive and dignified care to terminally ill patients and their families. Optimal pain control and overall comfort should be the aim, even though this could at times shorten life.

For all these reasons, The Salvation Army would oppose the legalisation and practice of euthanasia.

1. Genesis 1:27; Acts 17: 24 - 25

2. 2 Timothy 4:6-8

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