

Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Inc. Education Fund
Oral Statement
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The Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Netherlands makes no mention whatsoever of the growing and troubling practice of euthanasia in the Netherlands. This is a startling oversight.

In its 2009 evaluation of the Netherlands, the U.N. Human Rights Committee noted that it was “concerned at the extent of euthanasia and assisted suicides.” It said that there was no “guarantee that this decision [for euthanasia] was not the subject of undue influence or misapprehension.” The Committee urged that the Dutch law “be reviewed in light of the ... right to life.”¹

The situation has gotten worse since then. The annual number of euthanasia or assisted suicide deaths has more than doubled since 2009, rising to 6091 deaths in 2016, according to the annual report of the Dutch euthanasia review committees.² These include the deaths of people who have dementia and people who have only mental (not physical) health problems, such as depression, loneliness, and post-traumatic stress.

In addition, the latest government-sponsored five-year survey, published this year, found that in 2015 a total of 431 patients were intentionally killed without making an explicit request for death.³ That’s an increase over the 310 who were reportedly killed without request in 2010.⁴ How could the Working Group report neglect to express any concern about a practice like this?

Both the Human Rights Committee⁵ and the Committee on the Rights of the Child⁶ have criticized the euthanizing of children under the age of 18 in the Netherlands. “The Committee wishes to underline its conviction that minors are in particular need of protection,” explained the Human Rights Committee.

¹ U.N. Human Rights Committee, “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, The Netherlands,” U.N. doc CCPR/C/NLD/CO/4, August 25, 2009.

² Netherlands Regionale Toetsingscommissies Euthanasie, *Jaarverslag 2016*, April 2017.

³ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, “Overledenen naar medische beslissing rond levenseinde;leeftijd,doodsoorzaak,” May 24, 2017.

⁴ Bregje D. Onwuteaka-Philipsen et al., “Trends in End-of-Life Practices Before and After the Enactment of the Euthanasia Law in the Netherlands from 1990 to 2010: A Repeated Cross-Sectional Survey,” *The Lancet*, Vol. 380, No. 9845 (September 8, 2012), pp. 908–15.

⁵ U.N. Human Rights Committee, “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, The Netherlands,” U.N. doc CCPR/CO/72/NET, 2001.

⁶ U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of the Netherlands,” U.N. doc CRC/C/NDL/CO/4, June 8, 2015.

The Human Rights Committee has also condemned the killing of disabled infants. In 2001 the Committee called infant euthanasia “violations of the right to life.”⁷ But such killing still takes place in the Netherlands. And the Working Group report completely ignores it.

The right to life, the right to health, and non-discrimination are all violated by the Dutch practice of euthanasia. No review of the human rights record of the Netherlands is complete without taking these facts into account. We urge the Human Rights Council to do so.

Thank you for your time.

⁷ U.N. Human Rights Committee, “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, The Netherlands,” U.N. doc CCPR/CO/72/NET, 2001.