

Belgian killed by euthanasia after a botched sex change operation

A Belgian has been killed by medical euthanasia after pleading for death because a botched sex change operation to turn her into a man had resulted in "a monster".



Nathan Verhelst was euthanised on the grounds of "unbearable psychological suffering" Photo: FACEBOOK

By Bruno Waterfield, Brussels

11:11AM BST 01 Oct 2013

Mother of sex change Belgian: 'I don't care about his euthanasia death'

Nathan, born Nancy, Verhelst, 44, was given legal euthanasia, most likely by lethal injection, on the grounds of "unbearable psychological suffering" on Monday afternoon.

Wim Distelmans, a cancer specialist who carried out the euthanasia, is the same doctor who late last year gave lethal injections to congenitally deaf twins who were frightened they were also going blind.

"I was the girl that nobody wanted," Mr Verhelst told **Het Laatste Nieuws** newspaper in the hours before her death.

"While my brothers were celebrated, I got a storage room above the garage as a bedroom. 'If only you had been a boy', my mother complained. I was tolerated, nothing more."

Mr Verhelst had hormone therapy in 2009, followed by a mastectomy and surgery to construct a penis in 2012. But "none of these operations worked as desired".

"I was ready to celebrate my new birth," he told the newspaper. "But when I looked in the mirror, I was disgusted with myself. My new breasts did not match my expectations and my new penis had symptoms of rejection. I do not want to be... a monster. "

The case will revive Belgium's debate over medical euthanasia as statistics show a steep year on year increase in the number of patients killed by doctors after a request to die.

Belgium recorded a record number of 1,432 cases of euthanasia in 2012, up 25 per cent from the previous year and the country is currently deciding whether to extend "mercy killing" legislation to children.

Professor Distelmans, who carried the euthanasia of Mr Verhelst, **is the same doctor who last December gave lethal injections to twins Marc and Eddy Verbessem, 45.**

The two brothers were both born deaf and asked for euthanasia after finding that they might also both go blind. After having their request to die refused by their local hospital, Prof. Distelmans accepted on the grounds of 'unbearable psychological suffering'.

"The choice of Nathan Verhelst has nothing to do with fatigue of life," said Dr Distelmans. "There are other factors that meant he was in a situation with incurable, unbearable suffering. Unbearable suffering for euthanasia can be both physical and psychological. This was a case that clearly met the conditions demanded by the law. Nathan underwent counseling for six months."

Last week, **figures showed that the number of Dutch people killed by medical euthanasia has more than doubled** in the 10 years since legislation was changed to permit it, rising 13 per cent last year to 4,188.

Euthanasia carried out by doctors at the request of a patient is only legal in three European countries, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

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