

Euthanasia at the Crossroads of Faith and Philosophy: Islamic vs. Western Thought

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Abstract. This article examines the perspectives of Islam and Western philosophy on euthanasia, focusing on whether it is acceptable within Muslim contexts. To provide a comprehensive understanding, the study employs an Islamic jurisprudential approach combined with analytical and descriptive methods. Drawing on primary Islamic sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, scholarly fatwas, and Islamic ethical principles. The findings indicate that, due to the sanctity of human life as a divine gift, active euthanasia is strictly prohibited in Islam. However, in circumstances where medical treatment proves ineffective or futile, Islamic teachings permit the withdrawal or discontinuation of life-sustaining interventions.

Keywords: Euthanasia, active form, passive form

Abstrak. Artikel ini mengkaji perspektif Islam dan filsafat Barat terhadap euthanasia, dengan fokus pada apakah praktik tersebut dapat diterima dalam konteks umat Muslim. Untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang komprehensif, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan yurisprudensi Islam yang dipadukan dengan metode analitis dan deskriptif. Berdasarkan sumber-sumber utama Islam – termasuk Al-Qur'an, Hadis, fatwa para ulama, serta prinsip etika Islam – ditemukan bahwa karena kesucian hidup manusia sebagai anugerah dari Allah, euthanasia aktif secara tegas dilarang dalam Islam. Namun, dalam kondisi ketika pengobatan tidak lagi efektif atau bersifat sia-sia, ajaran Islam memperbolehkan penghentian atau penarikan intervensi medis yang mempertahankan hidup.

Kata kunci: eutanasia, eutanasia aktif, eutanasia pasif

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INTRODUCTION

The word "euthanasia" has Greek roots, deriving from "eu," meaning "good," and "Thanatos," meaning "death," which together translates to "good death." According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, euthanasia is an act of assisting someone who is suffering from an incurable disease to die peacefully, including accelerating or withholding treatment or withdrawing artificial life support.¹ Euthanasia or merciful killing has two forms, active and passive.² Active euthanasia is the process in which doctors accelerate the process of death by adding some medicines to speed up the process of death and save the patient from further suffering.³ In passive euthanasia, doctors stop using any treatment or lifesaving machines that cause the patient's death gradually.⁴

Euthanasia has been a controversial issue since long ago. In ancient times, philosophers such as Plato and Socrates believed that people who are sick must die and do not have the right to live.⁵ On the other hand, some philosophers opposed this view, including Pythagoras, who believed that suicide was immoral.⁶ The Hippocratic Oath was one of the key foundations for rejecting euthanasia.⁷ In the 17th century, Francis Bacon was the first to raise this concept and attempt to legitimize it. Recently, data shows that many Western countries have legalized euthanasia and practice it in one way or another. Based on the Western cultural and fundamental principle of individual autonomy, people are free to make their own choices, even if it means ending their own lives. Countries such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium

¹ Maularna Akbar Shah and U Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible.," December 2018, <https://doi.org/10.31436/imjm.v17i2.952>.

² Luciana Pricoli Vilela and Paulo Caramelli, "O Conhecimento Da Definição de Eutanásia: Estudo Com Médicos e Cuidadores de Pacientes Com Doença de Alzheimer," *Revista Da Associação Médica Brasileira* 55, no. 3 (2009): 263–67, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-42302009000300016>.

³ Thane Josef Messinger, "A Gentle and Easy Death_ From Ancient Greece to Beyond Cruzan Tow," *Demer Law Review* 71 (January 1993): 175–251, <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2274&context=dlr&utm>.

⁴ Vilela and Caramelli, "O Conhecimento Da Definição de Eutanásia: Estudo Com Médicos e Cuidadores de Pacientes Com Doença de Alzheimer."

⁵ Rubel Islam, "Euthanasia: Western Perspectives," *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development* 7, No. 1 Volume 7, no. Issue 1 (February 2023), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8379936>.

⁶ Islam.

⁷ "Why the Hippocratic Oath Prohibits Physician-Assisted Suicide - Public Discourse," accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/11/57243/?utm>.

have legalized it.⁸ In Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Germany, Albania, Colombia, Japan, and certain U.S. states such as Washington, Oregon, Vermont, New Mexico, and Montana, euthanasia is permitted under specific conditions,⁹ including confirmation and the patient's interest.¹⁰ It is worth to highlight that despite the high acceptance of this phenomenon in Western and EU countries, there are still religious groups that oppose the concept of euthanasia, including Christian and Jewish religious people. They believe that life is a gift; therefore, it must not be misused.¹¹ Similarly, ethical considerations often prohibit euthanasia for moral reasons.¹²

Based on Islamic sources including the *Holy Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Islamic Ushul fiqh*, and fatwas of Islamic scholars, the deliberate killing of a person is generally considered impermissible and regarded as a sin.¹³ Based on Islamic jurisprudence, human life is extremely valuable and sacred,¹⁴ as it is a gift from Allah. No one should make any decision to interfere with or end it except Allah, who is the owner of our souls.¹⁵ The Holy Qur'an contains numerous verses that emphasize the sanctity of life and prohibit actions that undermine it.¹⁶ Murder is not only forbidden in Islam, but Allah also promises severe punishment for those who commit this crime. Conversely, saving someone's life is regarded as a precious act according to the Qur'an (Qur'an 4:29–30).¹⁷

Considering the fact that the acceptance of this phenomenon is increasing each day and many Western countries are legalizing euthanasia,¹⁸ it is important to examine the

⁸ J Pereira Mbchb Msc, "EUTHANASIA: THE SAFEGUARD ILLUSION E38 Current OnCOlOgy-VOLume 18, Number 2 Legalizing Euthanasia or Assisted Suicide: The Illusion of Safeguards and Controls," March 18, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.3747/co.v18i2.883>.

⁹ Uwe Güth, Shaun McMillan, and Edouard Battegay, "Medical Aid in Dying: Europe's Urgent Medico-Ethical Challenge," *International Journal of Public Health* (Frontiers Media SA, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2023.1606538>.

¹⁰ Joachim Cohen et al., "European Public Acceptance of Euthanasia: Socio-Demographic and Cultural Factors Associated with the Acceptance of Euthanasia in 33 European Countries," *Social Science and Medicine* 63, no. 3 (August 2006): 743–56, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.01.026>.

¹¹ Islam, "Euthanasia: Western Perspectives."

¹² IV AMA Principles of Medical Ethics: I, "AMA Code of Medical Ethics," accessed June 14, 2025, <https://code-medical-ethics.ama-assn.org/ethics-opinions/euthanasia>.

¹³ Nazila Isgandarova, "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Other Forms of Euthanasia in Islamic Spiritual Care," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 69, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 215–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305015616099>.

¹⁴ Mohammad Manzoor Malik, "Chapter 11 Euthanasia: An Islamic Perspective," 2011.

¹⁵ Mahmud Adesina Ayuba, "EUTHANASIA: A MUSLIM'S PERSPECTIVE," *Scriptura* 115, no. 0 (June 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7833/115-0-1175>.

¹⁶ Ayuba.

¹⁷ Talal, *Holy Quran*, trans. TALAL ITANI, 2012, www.ClearQuran.com.

¹⁸ Cohen et al., "European Public Acceptance of Euthanasia: Socio-Demographic and Cultural Factors Associated with the Acceptance of Euthanasia in 33 European Countries."

Islamic perspective on this issue and ensure that new generations are informed about the Islamic philosophy surrounding it. Some research has been conducted in the past on this topic; however, this paper offers a novel approach, as euthanasia is typically studied from either an Islamic perspective or a Western framework. While This article combines both viewpoints using new data, particularly a survey that indicates a high demand for and acceptance of euthanasia in Western regions. In this way, the current article contributes to filling the existing literature. This article aims to explore the concept of euthanasia as interpreted through the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic scholars' perspectives as well as Western philosophical views and practices related to this topic.

METHODOLOGY

For developing of the current article, the author used the Islamic jurisprudence method and a mix of Analytical and descriptive approaches. the information has been gathered through Islamic primary sources such as *Holy Quran*, *Hadith*, Islamic *ushul fiqh* and thoughts of contemporary Islamic scholars such as Shaikh Yusuf Qardawi and Wahbah al- Zuhaili. additionally, other secondary data including online books, journals and websites have been employed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Euthanasia in Islamic philosophy

Euthanasia has a Greek root, which means good death; it is also known as mercy killing.¹⁹ Based on the legal law dictionary, Euthanasia is the "terminating of a person's life that will end the pain and suffering."²⁰ This means killing someone with good attention and releasing the patient from further suffering with the consent of the patient or sometimes with confirmation from their family members.²¹ There are two

¹⁹ Ayuba, "EUTHANASIA: A MUSLIM'S PERSPECTIVE."

²⁰ "MERCY KILLING," accessed June 17, 2025, <https://thelawdictionary.org/mercy-killing/?utm>.

²¹ Halima Kashkoli and Maryan Safayee, "The effect of consent in euthanasia from the perspective of Iranian jurisprudence and criminal law," *Arshiyān Fars Quarterly; Second Year; Issue No. 8 8* (2023): 34–44, https://www.jlpa.ir/article_187372.html?lang=en.

types of Euthanasia, active and with attention, which means that the doctors speed up the death of the patient so that he/she dies.²² In these circumstances, speeding up the death of the patient is done by taking some deliberate actions, for example, injecting a lethal injection like sodium chloride or giving some drugs that will kill the patient in order to stop the further suffering of the patient who is dealing with a non-accruable illness.²³ A passive form of Euthanasia is in which the doctors withhold the mechanical life-sustaining, which will cause the death of the patient gradually.²⁴

The history of Euthanasia dates back to ancient Rome and Greece, and the concept has evolved over the years.²⁵ Currently, many countries around the world have legalized this. However, as Muslims, to draw a clear picture of Islamic philosophy regarding the acceptance or rejection of this phenomenon, and before we say yes or no to Euthanasia, it is essential to study the active euthanasia and passive one very carefully. Additionally, it's vital to refer to some important Islamic sources, including the Quran, the Hadith, and the fatwas of Islamic scholars in order to understand their standpoints comprehensively and then draw a conclusion.

a. Active Euthanasia based on Islamic perspective:

From the Islamic *ushul fiqh's* perspective, human life is extremely valuable and it's scariest,²⁶ as it is a gift from Allah. No one should take any decision to interfere in to it and end it except Allah, who is the owner of our souls.²⁷ The Holy Quran contains numerous verses that emphasize the sanctity of life and prohibit actions that undermine it.²⁸ In the active Euthanasia, as there are clear and direct attentions from both sides the requester(patient) and the doer of the action (physician) to end a life. Therefore, Murder is not only forbidden in Islam, but Allah also promises severe

²² Bernadette Spina, "ETHICAL JUSTIFICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVE EUTHANASIA," December 1998, <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=jolpi&utm>.

²³ Spina.

²⁴ Halima Kashkoli and Maryan Safayee, "The effect of consent in euthanasia from the perspective of Iranian jurisprudence and criminal law."

²⁵ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible."

²⁶ Malik, "Chapter 11 Euthanasia: An Islamic Perspective."

²⁷ Ayuba, "EUTHANASIA: A MUSLIM'S PERSPECTIVE."

²⁸ Ayuba.

punishment for those who commit this crime.²⁹ Conversely, saving someone's life is regarded as a precious act according to the Quran (Quran 4: 29-30).³⁰ as in the active Euthanasia, both patient and doctors have the attention to interfere in Allah's work by ending up a life. therefore, it's prohibited for the below Islamic reasons:

b. The Value of Human Life from the Quran's Perspective:

The importance of human life in the Quran is emphasized in Surah al-Maidah, where Allah states, "That is why We ordained for the Children of Israel that whoever takes a life unless as a punishment for murder or for causing mischief in the land it is as if they have killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it is as if they have saved all of humanity" (Quran 5: 32).³¹ Additionally, in Maidah 105, Allah says, "O believers! You are accountable only for yourselves. It will not harm you if someone chooses to deviate, as long as you are rightly guided. To Allah, you will all return, and He will inform you of what you used to do" (5: 105).³²

In Surah An-Nisa, Allah SWT advises people not to harm themselves or one another. He warns that those who engage in such actions will face severe consequences. The verse states, "O believers! Do not devour one another's wealth illegally, but rather trade by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves or each other. Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you. And whoever does this sinfully and unjustly, we will burn them in the Fire. That is easy for Allah" (Quran 4: 29-30).³³ This is why suicide is considered Haram (forbidden) in Islam. Additionally, the concept of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, or the objectives of Islamic law is basically to safeguard human life, promote benefits, and prevent harm. Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah encompasses five principal purposes such as Hifz al-din (protection of religion), Hifz al-nafs (protection of life), Hifz al-aql (protection of intellect), Hifz al-nasl (protection of lineage), and Hifz al-mal (protection of property). The protection of life (hifz al-nafs) is most important aspect of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, even some it's taking preference over the safeguarding of ritual practices. the great example

²⁹ Kiarash Aramesh and Heydar Shadi, "Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective," *IRANIAN JOURNAL OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND IMMUNOLOGY*. All Rights Reserved, vol. 6, 2007, www.SID.ir.

³⁰ Talal, *Holy Quran*.

³¹ Talal.

³² Talal.

³³ Talal.

is, the regulations issued by Islamic scholars during the COVID-19 pandemic such as minimizing physical gatherings and maintain social distancing and so on.³⁴

Based on the highlighted Surah al-Maidah, Allah explicitly prohibits humans from killing one another or taking a human's life, except in cases of murder or spreading mischief.³⁵ Allah not only forbids this act but also states that killing one person is like killing all of humanity.³⁶ It is clear that Allah forbids all human beings from taking any life; therefore, no one is permitted to decide when to end their life's or others life's under any circumstances.³⁷ Furthermore, based on Allah's order if someone commits a murder, they will face severe consequences. As mentioned in Surah An-Nisa, "And whoever kills a believer intentionally, their reward will be Hell where they will stay indefinitely. Allah will be displeased with them, condemn them, and will prepare for them a tremendous punishment" (Surah An-Nisa: 93).

so as a result performing the act of euthanasia with the intention of ending someone's life is directly prohibited in the Quran. Additionally, Allah in Surah An-Nisa emphasizes that individuals are responsible for protecting their lives and must safeguard themselves from any harm while they are alive.³⁸

c. Hadith:

Prophet Muhammad PBH said that "Amongst the nations before you there was a man who got a wound, and growing impatient (with its pain), he took a knife and cut his hand with it and the blood did not stop till he died. Allah said, 'My Slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him (to enter) Paradise'.³⁹ Additionally, there is another Hadith, told by Abu Hurayrah that The Prophet said, "He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire (forever)

³⁴ Moh Dahlan et al., "The Islamic Principle of Ḥifz Al-Nafs (Protection of Life) and COVID-19 in Indonesia: A Case Study of Nurul Iman Mosque of Bengkulu City," *Helijon* 7, no. 7 (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helijon.2021.e07541>.

³⁵ Aramesh and Shadi, "Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective," 2007.

³⁶ Talal, *Holy Quran*.

³⁷ Isgandarova, "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Other Forms of Euthanasia in Islamic Spiritual Care."

³⁸ Talal, *Holy Quran*.

³⁹ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible."

and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell-Fire".⁴⁰

Based on the highlighted Hadiths from Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him; it is clear that Allah has created the soul of a human being; therefore, it is sacred and highly valued. (Quran 5: 32)⁴¹ therefore, it is not only prohibited to speed up the process of death, but Allah will punish the people who do this act in a very tough way.⁴² As a result, As Muslims, we are not allowed to interfere in speeding our or someone else life because Allah is the only owner of it.⁴³

d. Euthanasia in Light of the International Islamic Code of Medical and Health Ethics: A Normative Ethical Perspective:

Based on article 61 of International Islamic Code of Medical and Health Ethics's code, it directly prohibits to act active euthanasia and states that the "Human life is sacred, and it should never be wasted except in the cases where Shari'a specified and allowed in the law. ⁴⁴According to this code the medical profession should not take an active action and contribution in terminating the life of a patient, even if it is at his or his guardian's request, and even if the reason is severe deformity, a hopeless, incurable disease, or severe, unbearable pain that cannot be alleviated by the usual pain killers. Instead they should urge his patient to endure and remind him of the reward of those who tolerate their condition.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Malik, "Chapter 11 Euthanasia: An Islamic Perspective."

⁴¹ Talal, *Holy Quran*.

⁴² Malik, "Chapter 11 Euthanasia: An Islamic Perspective."

⁴³ Aramesh and Shadi, "Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective," 2007.

⁴⁴ 2 DR. AMJAD HAYAT, 3 DR. SYED SHAMEEL AHMED QUADRI, 4 DR. SOHAIL RASOOL, 5 DR. SHAMSHAD AKHTER, 6 DR. MUHAMMAD SARWAR 1 ZULAIKHA SAEED, "ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND POLICY, CURE IN THE LIGHT OF QURAN AND SUNNAH 1 ZULAIKHA SAEED, 2," 2023, <https://www.russianlawjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/2583/1458>; Mohammed Ghaly, "Islamic Ethical Perspectives on Life-Sustaining Treatments," *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal* (World Health Organization, August 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.26719/emhj.22.044>.

⁴⁵ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible."

2. Passive Euthanasia:

Islam has always encouraged people to seek medication for treating their sicknesses because Allah has created medication for all sicknesses except death.⁴⁶ Now, what if the cure or treatment does not work? Should the patient continue the treatment despite its ineffectiveness? and what is the stand of Islams in this regard? Does the patient or physician can stop the treatment? To respond to this critical question, let us examine the International Islamic Code of Medical and Health Ethics and Fatwas from Islamic scholars.

a. Islamic code of medical ethnics:

According to this Code which is endorsed in 1981,⁴⁷ when a patient's condition becomes hopeless and no cure is available, it is generally considered best to halt treatment and end life support. In such situations, family and caregivers are encouraged to leave the patient with Sabar (patience). This approach aligns with the concept of passive euthanasia as outlined.⁴⁸ The guideline directly states in case doctors are scientifically sure that the medicines are not helpful and they are certain that life cannot be restored, it is not effective to use artificial life support and cause further suffering⁴⁹ as the main job of the doctors are to enhance the health condition of the patient not make the dying process longer.⁵⁰

b. Fatwas from famous Islamic scholars:

Regarding the passive Etheromania, there are some fatwas from the Islamic well-known scholars such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi and a contemporary Islamic scholar “Wahbah al Zuhaili” when medication does not help the patient and it became useless,

⁴⁶ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung.

⁴⁷ “Islamic Code of Medical Ethics Kuwait Document | Encyclopedia.Com,” accessed June 17, 2025, https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/islamic-code-medical-ethics-kuwait-document?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

⁴⁸ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, “Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible.”

⁴⁹ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, “Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible.”

⁵⁰ Ghaly, “Islamic Ethical Perspectives on Life-Sustaining Treatments.”

suspension of medical treatment is allowed.⁵¹ Under few circumstances, doctors first should realize and make sure that life is not restorable. Secondly, patient must continue to receive the basic human being needs including of water, food, nursing, pain relief, emotional and spiritual assistance.⁵² Thirdly, there must be no direct attention of killing the patient.⁵³

According to Dr. Muzzami Siddiqi, The Islamic Society of North America's former president "If the patient is on life support, it may be permissible, with due consideration and care, to decide to switch off the life-support machine and let nature take its own time".⁵⁴

Considering the highlighted ideas of the well know Islamic scholars, it became clear that Islam does not prohibit the concept of the passive Euthanasia⁵⁵ as patient and doctors do not interfering and speeding directly to the death but when the doctors are sure that there is no chance of life restoration by medicine, they can stop providing the life support facilities. However, it's in a condition where the basic human needs of a human is provided as long as he/she is alive.⁵⁶

3. Seeking Endurance for the patient:

When a patient is facing a sickness or illness which doesn't have any a cure It's generally recommends to the doctors and rest of the families to encourages the patients to show persistence.⁵⁷ according to Quran, Allah gives rewards by paying off our sinful acts and words through putting any hardship, illness or difficulties for mankind.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Mehran Narimisa, *EUTHANASIA IN ISLAMIC VIEWS*, vol. vol.2 (Iran: European Scientific Journal June 2014 /SPECIAL/ edition ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print), 2014).

⁵² Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible."

⁵³ Akbar Shah and Tun Aung, "Euthanasia from the Islamic Perspective: Ending Life of a Patient Whose Recovery Is Absolutely Impossible."

⁵⁴ Kiarash Aramesh and Heydar Shadi, "Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective," *IRANIAN JOURNAL OF ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND IMMUNOLOGY. All Rights Reserved*, vol. 6, 2007, www.SID.ir.

⁵⁵ Aramesh and Shadi, "Euthanasia: An Islamic Ethical Perspective," 2007.

⁵⁶ Aramesh and Shadi.

⁵⁷ Dalhat Sani Khalid, "End of Life Care: The Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy* 33, no. 4 (November 1, 2019): 254–59, <https://doi.org/10.20467/1091-5710.23.3.254>.

⁵⁸ Constantin Iulian Damian et al., "The Quranic Instrumentalization of Suffering," *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vol. 12, August 2016, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312095441>.

Allah order Muslims to have faith and show endurance in the time of difficulties and sickness.⁵⁹ “But give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. Those who say when affected with calamity, ‘To Allah we belong and to Him is our return’”. They are those on whom descend blessings from their Lord and mercy. They are the ones who receive guidance (Quran 2:155–157).⁶⁰ Islam advices Muslims during hard time and sickness to trust Allah and seek the health from him as he is the only source of healing.⁶¹ The people can request their health through Dua (supplication), based on Holy Quran If someone call upon Allah sincerely asking for something he will receive response because Dua is the way to connect with Allah.⁶²

4. Euthanasia in the western history:

The history of euthanasia returns to Greece and ancient times.⁶³ History revealed that euthanasia was practiced in Greek times by one way or another. There was an island called Ceos where the older adults would come to gather annually to end their lives by drinking poison together.⁶⁴ Additionally, people could end their lives by getting permission from the Senat.⁶⁵ In Rome, self-killing was not only accepted, but it was exalted.⁶⁶ Some philosophers used the term euthanasia for their methods and approaches such as Plato and Socrates are among the philosophers from ancient Greece who believed that those who were mentally or physically sick did not have the right to live.⁶⁷ Therefore, they must not stay alive.

Meanwhile, they believed that suicide was acceptable.⁶⁸ Additionally, other philosophers, such as later Hellenistic and Roman Stoics, gave more attention to the person's or patient's request, based on whether the person is faced with something

⁵⁹ Khalid, “End of Life Care: The Islamic Perspective.”

⁶⁰ Talal, *Holy Quran*.

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⁶² 1 ZULAIKHA SAEED, “ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND POLICY, CURE IN THE LIGHT OF QURAN AND SUNNAH 1 ZULAIKHA SAEED, 2.”

⁶³ Anton J.L. Van Hooff, “Ancient Euthanasia: ‘Good Death’ and the Doctor in the Graeco-Roman World,” *Social Science & Medicine* 58, no. 5 (March 1, 2004): 975–85, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SOCSCIMED.2003.10.036>.

⁶⁴ Thane Josef Messinger, “A Gentle and Easy Death_ From Ancient Greece to Beyond Cruzan Tow.”

⁶⁵ Thane Josef Messinger.

⁶⁶ ANTON J. L. VAN HOOFF, “GOOD DEATH AND THE DOCTOR IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD,” *Social Science & Medicine* 58, No. 5, March 2004, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2003.10.036>.

⁶⁷ Islam, “Euthanasia: Western Perspectives,” 5.

⁶⁸ Thane Josef Messinger, “A Gentle and Easy Death_ From Ancient Greece to Beyond Cruzan Tow.”

that bothers them and makes them ashamed, such as poverty or illness, in which case they are allowed to end their life.⁶⁹ They indicated that in case the patients want to end their life, it must be their choice. In particular, Stoics believes that people have the right to end their life under any circumstance.⁷⁰ One of the philosophers, Socrates, committed suicide by poisoning himself.⁷¹

There were some scholars against the idea of allowing euthanasia in Greece. For instance, Pythagoras was quite opposed to the act of suicide because he believed that it was immoral.⁷² In ancient Rome, euthanasia was considered a punishable crime and was equivalent to murder. The Hippocratic Oath was one of the important foundations for avoiding euthanasia.⁷³ It was written in 400 B.C. by Hippocrates. Based on this, doctors were required to prevent any act that would harm the patients. Contributing to the killing of patients. The text of the oath says, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if he asks or suggests any such counsel".⁷⁴ This oath had to be confirmed by the entire medical community to protect patients and not use anything that could put the patient's life in jeopardy. Later on, in the 19th century, the doctor Thomas Percival invited medical ethics, and he was named the "father of medical ethics."⁷⁵

Although the act of euthanasia was not expanded and allowed,⁷⁶ the history of ancient times and Greece still shows that some form of euthanasia was practiced during that time. For instance, sick babies were put outside the home during the night to die.⁷⁷ This practice, while not a formal recognition of euthanasia, indicates a historical context where assisting someone in dying was not uncommon. However, the current concept of mercy killing was not known as of today in Roman and Greek times. In the

⁶⁹ St. Anne's College Ed Lamb, "Oxford Uehiro Centre Prize in Practical Ethics: 'Rational Departure': What Does Stoicism Reveal About Contemporary Attitudes Towards Suicide? | Practical Ethics," March 2021, <https://blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/2021/03/oxford-uehiro-centre-prize-in-practical-ethics-rational-departure-what-does-stoicism-reveal-about-contemporary-attitudes-towards-suicide/?utm>.

⁷⁰ Islam, "Euthanasia: Western Perspectives."

⁷¹ Islam.

⁷² Islam.

⁷³ "Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia - Holland-Frei Cancer Medicine - NCBI Bookshelf," accessed June 16, 2025, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK13381/>.

⁷⁴ "Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia - Holland-Frei Cancer Medicine - NCBI Bookshelf."

⁷⁵ Sara Patuzzo, Giada Goracci, and Rosagemma Ciliberti, "Thomas Percival. Discussing the Foundation of Medical Ethics," *Acta Biomedica* 89, no. 3 (September 1, 2018): 343–48, <https://doi.org/10.23750/abm.v89i3.7050>.

⁷⁶ Islam, "Euthanasia: Western Perspectives."

⁷⁷ Islam.

new era (17th) century, Francis Bacon was the first person to raise this concept under medical context.⁷⁸

Some group of people in the west are entirely against act of Euthanasia, regardless of the circumstances. They believe that it should not be done because it is immoral.⁷⁹ For instance, The Christian and Jewish people do not support the act of Euthanasia, believing that it is not in favor of the common good and it will breach the responsibility of human being towards God.⁸⁰ For example, based on Aquinas's view, as a Christian, people in this world are not only responsible for the common good in society, but they are responsible for themselves as well. So, they must not end their life by acting Euthanasia; therefore, they added that suicide is against the rule and will of God on earth.⁸¹

In contrast, some people during the Middle Ages supported this act and believed that it should be legalized because they think that it is morally acceptable and that people have the right to choose to either die or live. Therefore, assisting people who are suffering from an illness that does not have a cure is not considered a bad act, and it is allowed.⁸²

a. West cultural and Individual autonomy:

Euthanasia has been discussed widely and it was the core stone of the different era starting from Roman and Greek.⁸³ Due to the changing paradigm, people focuses more about the quality of life than the quantity, the concept of Euthanasia has got more popular and taken under consideration.⁸⁴ In 2002, the Netherlands and Belgium legalized active volunteer euthanasia, in which the patient voluntarily accept this act. In Switzerland, this act is permitted, but only if it is in the favor of patient.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Patuzzo, Goracci, and Ciliberti, "Thomas Percival. Discussing the Foundation of Medical Ethics."

⁷⁹ Islam, "Euthanasia: Western Perspectives."

⁸⁰ Islam.

⁸¹ Islam.

⁸² Islam.

⁸³ Yelson Alejandro Picón-Jaimes et al., "Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: An in-Depth Review of Relevant Historical Aspects," *Annals of Medicine and Surgery* (Elsevier Ltd, March 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amsu.2022.103380>.

⁸⁴ Sarah Mroz et al., "Assisted Dying around the World: A Status Quaestionis," *Annals of Palliative Medicine* 10, no. 3 (2021): 3540–53, <https://doi.org/10.21037/apm-20-637>.

⁸⁵ Cohen et al., "European Public Acceptance of Euthanasia: Socio-Demographic and Cultural Factors Associated with the Acceptance of Euthanasia in 33 European Countries."

The data revealed that many countries are changing their practices towards the concept of euthanasia and are trying to adapt to the desires and will of their people in particular in the past two centuries.⁸⁶ The European Values Study of 1999–2000 from 33 European countries shows a diverse range of acceptance towards euthanasia.⁸⁷ The demand for euthanasia is high in European countries in general. The survey shows that the rate of acceptance and request for legalizing euthanasia is 80–93% in Germany, 84% in Great Britain, 82% in Switzerland, 61% in France, 50% in Finland, and 24–65% in Poland. The data also revealed that in some countries, the acceptance rate and requests for legalization of this concept are even higher than those highlighted earlier, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, France, and Sweden.⁸⁸

The survey further revealed that the rate of acceptance of euthanasia has a direct link with the faith /religion of people. For example, in the religious countries the rate of demanding euthanasia is low because of their religion and believe in God and sin, and they consider euthanasia as immoral, which is against the favor of God, like Romania, Malta, and Turkey.⁸⁹ In contrast, the rate of demand is high in less religious countries. Meanwhile, the rate of acceptance of euthanasia is high among young and educated people as more than the older people.⁹⁰

Due to the changing paradigm from the quantity of life to quality, the concept of Euthanasia became more and more under consideration and accepted. In 2002,⁹¹ the Netherlands and Belgium legalized active volunteer euthanasia, in which the patient voluntarily accepted this act. In Switzerland, Luxembourg, Austria, and Spain, this act is performed but under specific conditions,⁹² including confirmation and the patient's interest, emphasizing the importance of the patient's wishes.⁹³ Additionally, countries

⁸⁶ Mroz et al., “Assisted Dying around the World: A Status Questionis.”

⁸⁷ Ibid., 749- 754

⁸⁸ Cohen et al., “European Public Acceptance of Euthanasia: Socio-Demographic and Cultural Factors Associated with the Acceptance of Euthanasia in 33 European Countries.”

⁸⁹ Cohen et al.

⁹⁰ Cohen et al.

⁹¹ Jonathan Micieli and St Michael’s Hospital, “Hume vs. Kant on Physician-Assisted Suicide: The Death With Dignity Act,” January 2006, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/50854749>.

⁹² Uwe Güth, Shaun McMillan, and Edouard Battegay, “Medical Aid in Dying: Europe’s Urgent Medico-Ethical Challenge,” *International Journal of Public Health* (Frontiers Media SA, September 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2023.1606538>.

⁹³ Güth, McMillan, and Battegay.

such as, Germany, Albania, Colombia, Japan, and certain states in the U.S. such as Washington, Oregon, Vermont, New Mexico, Montana, Colorado, Delaware, Maine, New Jersey, Vermont, California and some other states are currently practicing this.⁹⁴ Beyond the quality-of-life paradigm, alleviating the burden on family members and the government through discontinuing treatment and avoiding additional expenses is the another factor which contributed to acceptance and legalization of euthanasia in those countries, is.⁹⁵

The third reasons are cultural of acceptance of Euthanasia, based on the west perspective this is an absolute right of individual.⁹⁶ Therefore, people can decide to end their own life the way that they want. therefore, nobody should interfere.⁹⁷ The other reason is the Secularization and Decline of religion, as most people do not believe in God, sin, and hereafter day; they want to end their lives in the way that they want.⁹⁸

Based on Adela Cortina, unlike Muslim countries, Western countries are home to a wide range of people with diverse religions, beliefs, and cultures living together. There are two types of morals: the minimum and the maximum which exist there. The minimum includes the rules and regulations imposed by the state however, the maximum moral is adaptive include euthanasia, religion, and so on. According to the maximum moral concept, citizens have the right to act on euthanasia, and there is no prohibition on this.⁹⁹

The author asserts that, due to cultural values, beliefs, a priority on quality of life, and individual autonomy in identifying the timing of their death, euthanasia is extensively permitted in the West. Numerous countries are currently implementing this

⁹⁴ "States Where Medical Aid in Dying Is Authorized - Compassion & Choices," <https://Compassionandchoices.Org/>, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://compassionandchoices.org/states-where-medical-aid-in-dying-is-authorized/>.

⁹⁵ Halima Kashkoli and Maryan Safayee, "The effect of consent in euthanasia from the perspective of Iranian jurisprudence and criminal law."

⁹⁶ George L. Mendz and David W. Kissane, "Agency, Autonomy and Euthanasia," *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 48, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 555–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110520958881>.

⁹⁷ John Keown, "The Value of Autonomy," *Euthanasia, Ethics and Public Policy*, December 22, 2002, 52–57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511495335.010>.

⁹⁸ Güth, McMillan, and Battagay, "Medical Aid in Dying: Europe's Urgent Medico-Ethical Challenge," September 2023.

⁹⁹ Anneliese Dörr, "AUTONOMY AND EUTHANASIA: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTURAL CONTEXT AUTONOMY AND EUTHANASIA: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTURAL," July 2015, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4039.0245>.

concept and have even legalized it. Furthermore, individuals in Western countries believe that euthanasia is an appropriate choice that enables individuals to preserve a dignified existence, prioritizing the quality of life. They argue that when pain becomes intolerable and inevitable, choosing euthanasia is a logical alternative. This perspective has been endorsed by numerous Western scholars and cultural analysts, where moral decisions are typically rooted in human rights. Conversely, some groups, especially church leaders, oppose euthanasia, asserting that it contravenes the will of God.

CONCLUSION

The word "euthanasia" has Greek roots, deriving from "eu," meaning "good," and "thanatos," meaning "death," which together translates to "good death." According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, euthanasia is defined as "the act or practice of painlessly putting to death a person who is suffering from a painful and incurable disease or incapacitating physical disorder by taking some actions towards their death, like giving some medicine or injecting them. Alternatively, allowing them to die by withholding/stopping treatment or withdrawing artificial e-support measures." There are two types of euthanasia: active and passive. Active euthanasia is the process in which doctors accelerate the process of death by adding some medicines to speed up death and save the patient from further suffering. However, in passive euthanasia, due to the lack of effectiveness of the treatments, doctors stop using any treatment or other life support machines, causing the patient's death gradually.

The findings of this paper show that, based on direct verses from the Holy Quran and Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as well as Article 61 of the Islamic Code of Medical Ethics, active euthanasia where doctors are directly involved in speeding the death of a patient is not allowed because human life is sacred and a gift from Allah, and therefore should not be interfered with. However, if treatment fails, the Islamic code and the fatwas of scholars indicate that it is permitted under certain conditions, as explained above. The acceptance of this phenomenon is very high in Western countries, and there are many reasons behind it, including the culture of

individual autonomy, secularism, changes in the paradigm of life, and the desire to alleviate the burden of extra expenses on both the government and the patient's family. In my point of view, the concept of euthanasia is very different in Islamic and western philosophy because based on Islamic perspective, life is a gift of Allah hence, it's sacred and no one including the patient itself is allowed to interrupt in to it. Islam emphasis on the principle of ḥifz al-nafs (protection of life) and this concept directly prohibits active Euthanasia. Based on Islamic perspective, if someone is suffering including dealing with an incurable disease, they should be Patient because Holy Quran indicates that there are rewards for those who show Patient and do sabr. In contrast, West philosophy focuses more on the individual autonomy, quality of life and personal freedom, this has led numerous countries to legalize and practice Euthanasia. It's important to highlight that while, helping someone to relief from pain Is good, but I strongly support the Islamic philosophy because life is very valuable which must not be wasted except under certain conditions where Allah specified.

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