

# Outrage as 'Dr Death' offers euthanasia tours of 'inspiring' Auschwitz

A CONTROVERSIAL doctor who practises euthanasia has sparked outrage by organising a tour to Auschwitz because he says the Nazi death camp is 'inspiring'.

Belgian doctor Wim Distelmans, who has been dubbed 'Dr Death' for administering lethal injections, claims the visit will 'clarify confusion' about dying as well as addressing the issue of euthanasia.

But Jewish and anti-euthanasia campaigners have reacted with horror, saying the trip, billed as a study tour, is 'offensive and shocking'.

Labour MP Sir Gerald Kaufman said: 'To make the notorious Nazi

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concentration camp of Auschwitz the centre for a congenial study-trip is preposterous, if not obscene.

'Whatever one's views on euthanasia – and I am against – it is abominable to describe Auschwitz as an "inspiring venue". What went on at Auschwitz and the other death-camps was mass murder of innocents – children, women and men.'

Dr Distelmans, who co-ordinates legalised killings from his Brussels clinic, has circulated a brochure advertising the three-day tour for a

cost of £470, including visits to the Auschwitz gas chambers and a 'seminar' on issues including euthanasia, which is legal in Belgium.

He said in the leaflet that Auschwitz, in Poland, where a million people were put to death, was 'the pre-eminent symbol of a degrading end of life'. He added: 'This site is an inspiring venue for organising a seminar and reflecting on these issues so that we can consider and clarify confusions.'

The row coincides with controversy over attempts by the Labour peer and former Chancellor Lord Falconer to legalise-assisted suicide

in Britain, which critics say could prove a 'slippery slope' towards widespread killing of the sick.

Under Lord Falconer's Bill, which receives its second reading in the Lords on Friday, doctors would be able to prescribe terminally ill patients a lethal dose of drugs, but the patient would have to take the drugs themselves.

Belgium has gone a step further by allowing doctors to legally administer a fatal dose. Dr Distelmans, 60, gained notoriety after he was shown on TV ending the life of Nathan Verhelst, 44, a transsexual who asked to die after doctors botched his sex change surgery.

Last year, he performed the world's first double euthanasia for deaf twin brothers Marc and Eddy Verbessem, 45, after they learned that they were going blind.

According to a leaflet advertising the tour, the visit to Auschwitz will take place on October 9, and will include a 'scientific programme', details of which are not yet finalised.

It says they will be accompanied by documentary maker Lydia Chagoll, who was imprisoned in a Japanese camp during the