

# Terminally ill man challenges assisted suicide law in High Court

By Rozina Sabur

A TERMINALLY ill man who fears becoming “entombed” in his body has asked judges to let him die, in the first case of its kind in three years.

Noel Conway, 67, suffers from motor neurone disease and said he wants a doctor to help end his life by prescribing a lethal dose of a drug when he is ready to die, without fear of prosecution.

The case is the first since the appeal to the Supreme Court by Tony Nicklinson, the right-to-die campaigner, was rejected in 2014.

It is also the first High Court challenge to the controversial law since MPs rejected proposals to introduce assisted dying in 2015.

Mr Conway is seeking a judicial review to the current law – the 1961 Suicide Act – which makes it a criminal offence to assist in a suicide, with a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.

The campaign group Dignity in Dying is supporting his legal bid, which argues that the current law is not compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998, which says that individuals should have respect for a private and family life.

Mr Conway, a retired college lecturer from Shropshire, has been given months to live. He said: “If I let nature take its course, I could effectively become entombed in my own body as my ability to move and communicate continues to diminish, or I may die by suffocation or choking.” The case is the lat-

est in a run of challenges to the law on assisted dying.

In 2014 the Supreme Court rejected Mr Nicklinson’s appeal, made with two other disabled men, to allow doctors to help them die.

In the landmark ruling, the Supreme Court concluded that it had the power to declare the Suicide Act “incompatible” with human rights. But, in a highly significant intervention, Lord Neuberger-



Noel Conway, who suffers from motor neurone disease, says he fears being ‘entombed’ in his own body

er, the court’s president, said that they were doing so partly “to enable Parliament to consider the position”.

However, in a major Commons vote in 2015, MPs rejected proposals to introduce right to die in England and Wales. The issue has divided Parliament over fears any such law would put some vulnerable and disabled people at risk.

Mr Conway’s wife Carol told the BBC: “I do support him and think he should have the right to say enough is enough rather than fighting for breath and not being able to move.”

The High Court is expected to hear Mr Conway’s case in the next few months.