

Spain promised euthanasia law as man held for helping wife die

By Daniel Wittenberg in Barcelona

THE euthanasia debate has become a prominent issue in the Spanish general election campaign after a 70-year-old man was arrested for helping his terminally ill wife to end her life.

Ángel Hernández spent Thursday night, the first since the death of his wife María José Carrasco, in a Madrid police cell after confessing to giving a lethal drug dose to the 61-year-old, a long-term sufferer of multiple sclerosis.

The widower has since been released subject to inquiries, but not without rekindling a controversy about the right to die in the traditionally Catholic country.

"The police told me 'it's the law', but they would have done the same thing themselves. Yes, it's the law, but it is wrong," Mr Hernández told *El País* newspaper.

"I could have done it secretly," he added. "I argued about that with my wife, who was a legal secretary and knew what could happen to me. But I convinced her that it was important for this to come out."

Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish prime minister, has promised to legalise euthanasia if he wins a majority on April 28. He blamed the centre-Right party Ciudadanos (Citizens) and the Right-wing People's Party (PP) for blocking a bill legislating the right to die.

Mr Sánchez, the leader of the Socialist party, told Spanish television that he was "overcome with emotion and somewhat outraged" by the arrest.

He condemned a congress standing committee, controlled by Ciudadanos and the PP, for persistently holding up legislation and suggested he would pardon Mr Hernández.

Albert Rivera, the leader of Ciudadanos, said he would seek consensus on the issue but criticised the prime minister for "using the case for political gain".