

Doctors to end man's life after 11-year coma

France

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Doctors are preparing to turn off life support for a French man who has been in a persistent vegetative state since 2008 and whose plight has divided his family and the nation.

Staff at Sébastopol Hospital in Reims, northeastern France, say they will allow Vincent Lambert to die after today; the latest development in a case that has been fought out in the courts since 2011 when doctors concluded that there was no hope of a recovery for the psychiatric nurse, now 42, who suffered devastating injuries in a car crash. He is expected to take two to four days to die.

The controversy has pitted his wife Rachel against his parents, churchmen against the medical establishment, and the French state against the United Nations, whose committee on disabled rights wants time to consider the case. His mother and father, Viviane, and Pierre Lambert, 73 and 90 respectively, appealed to President Macron to intervene and held a demonstration outside the hospital, where they were joined by 300 supporters. They plan to file a criminal lawsuit against Vincent Sanchez, head of palliative care at the hospital.

France's Conference of Bishops has urged the hospital to postpone the date: "Why this rush to lead him to death?"

J. Vines, May 20, 2019