

World

Life support must resume for man in 11-year coma

France

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Doctors were ordered to resume life-sustaining treatment for a French man who has been in a persistent vegetative state for 11 years yesterday, hours after withdrawing medical support.

The decision by the Paris appeal court was welcomed by the parents of Vincent Lambert, 42, but the family is deeply divided. His wife and nephew say that treatment is against his wishes.

Viviane Lambert, 73, his mother, said: "They were in the process of eliminating Vincent. This is a very great victory. They are going to feed him again and to give him drinks again."

François Lambert, 38, his nephew, said: "This is really pure sadism." He accused the parents of pursuing the case out of Catholic "activism". "Vincent Lambert is a political football," he said. "He is no longer a human being."

The court ruled that Mr Lambert should receive treatment until the UN committee on the rights of persons with disabilities had studied his case, which could take six months. Mr Lambert, a psychiatric nurse, has been in a persistent vegetative state since a car crash in 2008. Once life support was turned off, he was expected to die within four days.

Rachel Lambert, 37, his wife, a nurse, claims that he had always expressed a desire to be allowed to die in such circumstances. The hospital concluded in 2013 that intravenous hydration and nutrition should be ended under France's passive euthanasia law. The decision was backed by five of Mr Lambert's brothers and sisters.

But one sister, a half-brother and his parents, who are devout Catholics, challenged the hospital through the French courts and the European Court of Human Rights, finally appealing to the UN committee.

Mr Lambert's mother released a video of him with his eyes open and blinking. "Vincent is fine. Vincent is not at the end of his life. Vincent only needs drink, food and love," she said.

Maitre Francis Fossier, the lawyer for Mr Lambert's wife, said she would file a criminal lawsuit against his mother for an "unspeakable" breach of his privacy.