

UNITED KINGDOM

Countdown for Indi Gregory

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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Hope that the courts would allow Indi to be transferred to Italy were probably dashed yesterday afternoon when Mr Justice Peel handed Indi Gregory's parents his final decision on where Indi should spend the last hours of her life: "baby Indi's life support must be removed at 2pm tomorrow, Thursday 9 November at the Queen's Medical Centre or in a hospice", but not at her home in Ilkeston Derbyshire, as her parents had

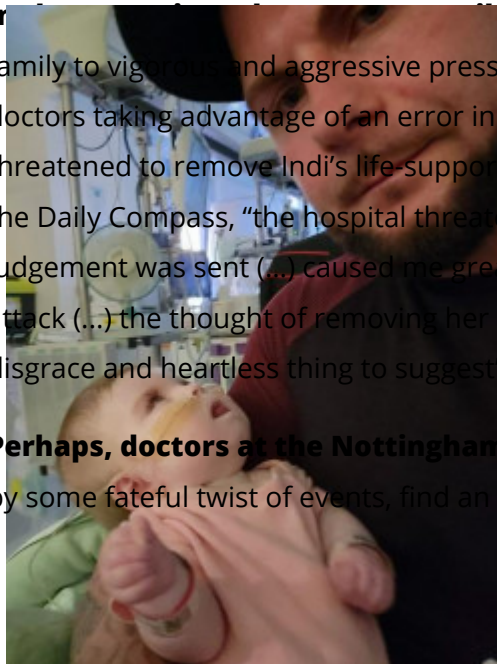
requested, read the [press statement from Christian Concern](#) supporting the family. The family has already announced it will appeal the decision. They want to plea once again for Indi born with mitrochondial disease, to be allowed to go home at this tragic moment of her short life. The court's decision to accept or refuse their request will be communicated today.

Indi's life has been hanging by a thread since litigation began between Nottingham Hospital Trust and Indi's parents, Dean Gregory and Claire Staniforth, last September over what is in the eight-month-old baby's best interests. Mr Justice Peel, the presiding judge, authorised the withdrawal of Indi's life support on 16 October. It would be the first of a series of judgements which would effectively condemn the baby girl to a premature death. Fresh hope to save Indi, however, came when Italy took an interest in her case and after the family had [exhausted all possible legal challenges in the UK and to the ECHR](#). The offer from the Vatican Paediatric Hospital Bambin Gesù to take Indi and continue her treatment including performing a heart operation which would enable her to breathe independently, appeared to give Indi another unexpected chance. But, much to the family's and to the public's dismay, Mr Justice Peel, in two High Court judgments on 3 and 4 November blocked Indi's transfer to Italy for specialist treatment and again ruled that it is in her 'best interests' to die.

Not defeated at the first hurdle, Italy responded to Peel's ruling by granting Indi Italian citizenship. In a dramatic twist of events, Giorgia Meloni Italy's Prime minister, after an emergency meeting decided to gift Indi Italian citizenship on 6 November, guaranteed payment for her treatment in Rome and then issued emergency measures authorising her to be transferred to Bambin Gesù. Mr Gregory told the daily Compass, he has already "raised the money necessary to finance the air ambulance that would bring baby Indi to Italy and give her a chance at life".

In the meantime, the battle for Indi's care continued to subject the family to vigorous and aggressive pressure to end her life-support. Yesterday, the doctors taking advantage of an error in the draft copy of Mr Justice Peel's ruling, threatened to remove Indi's life-support in the absence of Indi's father. Mr Gregory told the Daily Compass, "the hospital threatening to remove life support before the official judgement was sent (...) caused me great stress, it felt like I was going to have a heart attack (...) the thought of removing her life support when I wasn't there (...) is an utter disgrace and heartless thing to suggest".

Perhaps, doctors at the Nottingham hospital are nervous that Indi could indeed, by some fateful twist of events, find an escape route to Italy. "On 7 November, the Italian



consul in Manchester, Dr Matteo Corradini, in his role as Indi Gregory's guardian issued an emergency measure, recognising the authority of the Italian courts and judgement in this case. The judgement authorises the transfer of the minor to the hospital Bambin Gesù in Rome and the adoption of the proposed therapeutic plan. The Italian consul also appointed a special guardian to manage the situation. The decree was communicated by the guardian to the managing director of the British hospital in order to encourage an orderly and constructive collaboration between the Italian and English health authorities in order to avoid legal questions over conflict of jurisdiction", announced Tom Allen in a press statement for Christian Concern.

Mr Gregory, on his part, thanked the Italian president, the Italian government and the Italian people in a public statement, "we thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we see you as Indi's guardian angel for the compassion and love you have, trying to help our daughter to get the care she needs and for the devotion you have for Indi, makes us so happy. But, there is still an urgency to appeal to the British government to allow Indi to be allowed to come to Italy, before it's too late. As a father, I have never asked or begged for anything in my life, But I proudly beg you to please help us keep our daughter's life from being taken away".

On Indi's case, the Catholic Bishops Patrick McKinney, Bishop of Nottingham, and John Sherrington, Lead Bishop for Life Issues published a joint comment in support of Indi's right to life. "The suspension of disproportionate therapies cannot justify the suspension of basic care which includes treatments that are required to maintain essential physiological functions as long as the body can benefit from them (such as hydration, nutrition, proportionate respiratory support, thermoregulation and pain management)".... "We should never act with the deliberate intention to end a human life, including the removal of basic care so that death might be achieved", their statement read.

Hollie Dance, mother of Archie Battersbee, who fought and lost her fight to defend her son's right to life including the right to take him abroad for treatment, told the Daily Compass, "I stand by Dean and Claire in their fight to save Indi. I don't think people realise you are under state detention in these cases. Unless you live through these situations, you have no idea how dark and lonely this fight is."

Over the years, the UK has been the stage for a number of high profile end of life cases. Notably, they share several common threads, but there is one which stands out at this particular time: the glaring disparity between what parents say is their child's condition in hospital and the tragic statements given under oath by the NHS doctors. In

Indi's case, medics told the judge Indi was currently "clearly distressed, agitated and in pain" because of her treatment. Yet, it's difficult to match this statement to the very recent videos, taken by her parents, of Indi responding to her parents' touch, clearly enjoying the music playing in the background with no visible sign of her being in pain. Moreover, the latest High Court judgement which denied Indi the possibility of returning home, states, "The Trust would endeavour to stabilise her after extubation and assess the next step, a process which they think could take a week or so". If Indi can survive for "a week or so" after extubation, one wonders why Indi cannot take her chances and go to Italy and perhaps live three weeks or longer?