

French nurse sentenced to 10 years in jail for six murders

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VERSAILLES, France, Jan 31 (AFP) - A French court on Friday sentenced a 33-year-old former nurse to 10 years in prison for murdering six patients, in a case that revived a debate in France about the legalization of euthanasia.

Christine Malevre claimed she acted out of compassion when she killed terminally ill patients admitted to the Francois-Quesnay hospital in the Paris suburb Mantes-la-Jolie, where she worked between February 1997 and May 1998.

Her attorney, Charles Libman, had urged the court to acquit Malevre, saying during his closing arguments that other doctors and nurses had committed euthanasia without being brought to trial.

But the families of several of the deceased denied that their relatives ever asked to die, and pro-euthanasia organizations have stepped back from offering support in the case.

Malevre, who had been accused of seven murders and faced a maximum sentence of life in prison, was acquitted of one count of murder by the court in Versailles, outside of Paris. She was barred from ever working as a nurse.

Malevre was expected to be transferred to a Versailles women's prison later Friday.

Psychiatrists who examined Malevre concluded that she had "a morbid fascination with illness" and that, despite having some personality disorders, she was aware of her acts.

In custody, Malevre allegedly admitted to helping around 30 patients die, but later in a book entitled "Mes Aveux" (My Testimony), she only spoke of three assisted suicides and one fatal "error."

Arrested in 1998, she was released pending her trial on condition she no longer worked as a nurse and that she received psychological counseling.