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BBC Host Admits Killing Ailing Partner

By [SARAH LYALL](#)

LONDON — The revelation seemed to slip out, almost as an aside. In the midst of narrating a television program about end-of-life decisions, the documentary maker Ray Gosling departed from the prepared script [and declared](#), his voice shaking with emotion, “I killed someone once.”

He said the person had been a partner from long ago, stricken with [AIDS](#). “In a hospital one hot afternoon, the doctor said, ‘There’s nothing we can do,’ and he was in terrible, terrible pain,” Mr. Gosling, 70, said Monday in the [BBC](#) program “Inside Out.”

“I said to the doctor, ‘Leave me just for a bit,’ and he went away. I picked up the pillow and smothered him until he was dead.”

The confession put Mr. Gosling, a well-known figure who has made dozens of documentaries for radio and television, in the center of a furious long-running debate about [euthanasia](#) in [Britain](#). But if he was defying the authorities to do something about it, they called his bluff. On Wednesday, Mr. Gosling [was arrested](#) on suspicion of murder and taken to a Nottinghamshire police station for questioning. He has not yet been formally charged.

In interviews after the initial broadcast, Mr. Gosling refused to name the man he said he had killed or to reveal where the killing took place. He has also said that he would not give the name to the police.

Assisted [suicide](#) is illegal in England and Wales ([Scotland has its own legal system](#)) and carries a sentence of up to 14 years in prison. But though the law seems perfectly clear, it is full of ambiguity. Recent cases have tested when and in what way the state is prepared to intervene.

In September, the director of public prosecutions, Keir Starmer, issued [interim guidelines](#) laying out factors he said the state would consider in deciding when to file charges in cases of assisted suicide. These include whether the deceased wanted to die and was incurably ill, and whether the deceased was 18 or older and competent to make decisions.

Mr. Starmer was responding to a lawsuit brought by [Debbie Purdy](#), who has [multiple sclerosis](#) and wants assurances that her husband will not be prosecuted if he helps her end her life.

In the last decade, dozens of terminally ill Britons have traveled to Switzerland, where assisted suicide is legal, and killed themselves with the help of friends or family members. No one has yet been charged in connection with the deaths.

But in two high-profile cases this year, two mothers were prosecuted in connection with the deaths of gravely ill children in Britain.

In one case, Frances Inglis, 57, was [sentenced to life](#) in prison after injecting her severely brain-damaged 22-year-old son, Thomas, with heroin, as he lay in a nursing home. She said she had acted out of love and that Thomas, who had jumped from a moving ambulance after being injured in a brawl in 2007, had never been able to express his desire to end his life.

In the second case, Bridget Kathleen Gilderdale, 55, was [acquitted of attempted murder](#) after helping her 31-year-old daughter, Lynn, kill herself with a lethal cocktail of drugs. The circumstances seemed clearer: for 17 years Lynn had suffered from severe [myalgic encephalomyelitis](#) that left her bedridden, in severe pain and unable to eat except through a tube. She had [yearned to die](#), the evidence showed, and had tried several times to commit suicide before begging her mother to help her in her final attempt.

The judge in that case condemned the prosecution for bringing the case and praised the jury for its “common sense, decency and humanity.” The courtroom erupted in cheers as the verdict was announced.

Mr. Gosling’s confession raised a flurry of condemnation from groups opposing assisted suicide. In several interviews the next day, on radio and television, Mr. Gosling said he had no regrets.

He also said that he had promised his former partner that he would help him end his life if the pain became unbearable.

“I did the right thing,” he told the BBC. “If there’s a heaven and he’s looking down, he’d be proud of me.”

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