

INQUEST PRESS RELEASE TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2005

VINCENT SHEM - DEATH OF BLACK PRISONER IN HMP WANDSWORTH – INQUEST TO BEGIN

Wednesday 12 October 9.30am
HM Deputy Assistant Coroner Dr Shirley Radcliffe
Westminster Coroner's Court
65 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2ED

The inquest into the death of 32-year-old Vincent Shem, a Ghanaian man who was found hanged in HMP Wandsworth on 14 February 2005, will start on Wednesday 12 October and is expected to last three days.

Vincent was due to be deported back to Ghana at the end of his six month sentence. He was not considered by the prison to be suicidal, although it is believed that he had spoken to a listener in the prison and had been heard crying in his cell.

Vincent was the first of two men to take their life in HMP Wandsworth within one week.

The family hope that the inquest will examine a number of key issues including:

- Whether prison officers in HMP Wandsworth had received sufficient levels of training in suicide awareness and prevention and whether they followed that training in relation to the care Vincent received;
- What effect the regime in Wandsworth may have had on Vincent's state of mind. It is believed that he spent long periods of time locked in his cell with nothing to occupy himself;
- Whether the emergency medical cover at the prison at the time of his death was adequate;
- Whether the required roll checks confirming the whereabouts of prisoners were carried out by staff.

Notes to Editors

The family is being represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group member Dan Rubinstein of Hodge Jones and Allen and Lisa Sullivan of Cloisters Chambers.

INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts.