

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release 2 January 2009

**INQUEST TO OPEN INTO DEATH OF VULNERABLE BLACK PRISONER
IN SEGREGATION UNIT OF NOTORIOUS HMP RYE HILL**

10am Tuesday 6 January 2009

Sitting before HM Assistant Deputy Coroner for Northamptonshire, Tom Osbourne
Rushden and Diamond Conference Centre, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire, NN9 5QF

The inquest into the death of 23 year old Michael Bailey opens on 6 January. The hearing is expected to last for six weeks.

Michael Bailey was found hanging in the segregation unit at HMP Rye Hill on 24 March 2005. His death was one of three controversial deaths at the privately-run prison in a fifteen month time period. In the month following the death, Rye Hill was heavily criticised by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons who found that "the prison had deteriorated to the extent that we considered that it was at that time an unsafe and unstable environment, both for prisoners and staff."

Michael Bailey was sent to the segregation unit on 18 March 2005. He had previously been considered an outgoing person without any signs of mental illness. However, in the days prior to his death he suddenly began to exhibit severe symptoms of psychosis and talked openly of suicide. On 24 March, Michael hanged himself using a shoelace from the door of his cell.

His family hopes the inquest will examine:

- Whether staff were influenced by the fact that Michael was black and treated him as a dangerous person, rather than as a person who was seriously ill.
- Why Michael did not have a proper medical assessment and was not transferred to a health care facility.
- Why someone in Michael's condition was kept in segregation.
- Whether the checks required under the suicide risk regime were carried out by staff and whether records had been falsified.
- Why a cell that was supposed to be 'ligature-free' had an obvious ligature point.

Michael Bailey's family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members barrister Leslie Thomas of Garden Court Chambers, instructed by Nogah Ofer of Hickman and Rose Solicitors. Michael's family will give a statement at the conclusion of the inquest.

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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Notes to Editors:

1. 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 and conducts policy work on the issues arising.
2. Following the death of Michael Bailey a police investigation was conducted which resulted in charges being brought against four officers. Paul Smith, Daniel Daymond and Samantha Prime were charged with gross negligence manslaughter. Ben King was charged with intending to pervert the course of justice and Daniel Daymond charged that he counselled or procured Ben King to do so. All charges were dismissed by the judge at half time in response to a submission that there was no case to answer.
3. In her inspection report dated June 2005, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, was so concerned by the state of Rye Hill prison that she "immediately informed ministers and urged the chief executive of the National Offender Management Service to take immediate and decisive action". The report contains accounts of assaults, deaths, hostage-taking, indiscipline and high availability of drugs, drink and mobile telephones for prisoners. Inspectors also found inexperienced, inadequately supported staff in charge of large numbers of prisoners.
4. HMP Rye Hill is a privately-run prison near Rugby which opened in early 2001.

5. **Homicides and self-inflicted deaths in HMP Rye Hill 2001-date**

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Date of Death	Classification
Aleskey Baronovsky	Ukrainian White	34	10/06/2006	Self-Inflicted
Wayne Reid	UK Black	44	13/04/2005	Homicide
Michael Bailey	UK Black	23	24/03/2005	Self-Inflicted