



## The Birmingham News

### **Alabama releases first inmate, 56, under new medical furlough law** **Terminally ill man, 56, died just over a day later**

Thursday, May 21, 2009

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Without fanfare, the Alabama Department of Corrections has released its first inmate under a new law that allows for medical furloughs of geriatric, incapacitated or terminally ill prisoners who meet certain requirements.

According to the department, the inmate released was Omar Shariff Rahman, a 56-year-old who was serving life without parole at Donaldson Correctional Facility.

"Having met required release criteria - determined to be geriatric and terminally ill - he was released to the care of his family on Tuesday, April 21st," a department statement said.

In an e-mail, Corrections spokesman Brian Corbett said he understood that Rahman died about 30 hours later. His cause of death was not released.

Under the regulations devised to carry out the Alabama Medical Furlough Act, a geriatric inmate is 55 or older, "suffers from a chronic life-threatening infirmity," a life-threatening illness, or from "a chronic debilitating disease related to aging" and poses no danger to himself or society.

The regulations define a terminally ill inmate as someone "deemed to have an incurable disease that would, within reasonable medical judgment, produce death within 12 months."

The regulations also define an incapacitated inmate as someone suffering from "a permanent, irreversible physical or mental condition" that prevents him from being involved in a crime or from committing violence, and needing help to meet his daily living and health care needs.

The medical furlough law took effect Sept. 1. Its chief sponsor was Sen. Linda Coleman, D-Birmingham.

In a subsequent newsletter, Attorney General Troy King called the law's passage "another shortsighted attempt to reduce prison costs and crowding."

"While no inmate convicted of capital murder is eligible for this get out of jail free card, there are many who have been convicted of horrible and brutal crimes who will be," King said.

Corrections Commissioner Richard Allen said his department was glad to get the furlough process underway.

"The statute is designed to save money for DOC by releasing inmates who are terminally ill if family members are willing to take care of them, and they meet the law's necessary criteria," Allen said. "We believe it is humane to allow eligible inmates to die at home with their loved ones."

Rahman, who had served more than 26 years in prison, had been convicted of three counts of robbery in

1982 in Macon, Talladega and Tuscaloosa counties, "with priors for forgery and robbery as early as 1973," according to Corrections.

More than 25,000 prisoners are in the state's institutions, and Corrections estimates about 125 inmates may be eligible for medical furloughs. Those who are furloughed are to be monitored through the department's Supervised Re-Entry Program.

Before an inmate is furloughed, the attorney general, the district attorney in the circuit where he was prosecuted and the victim of his crimes are to be notified and given a chance to protest.

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