Former Black Panther Alleges Denial of Hepatitis C Treatment

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Mumia Abu-Jamal has filed a lawsuit against Pennsylvania state prison officials, alleging that they have systematically denied him hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment, despite his experiencing several life-threatening complications related to the liver disease, Think Progress reports.

A well-known African-American print and radio journalist, Abu-Jamal has been in jail since 1982, when he was convicted for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer, a crime Abu-Jamal claims he never committed. The former Black Panther ultimately received the death penalty.

Since the contested conviction, human rights activists at Amnesty International have noted that Abu-Jamal's case did not meet international standards for fair trail procedures. More than 20 years later, advocates around the world are still campaigning to overturn his sentence and get him off death row.

Abu-Jamal was diagnosed with hep C in 2012, but claims he was offered no HCV treatment or information about the disease since learning his status. In March 2015, prison medical personnel rushed an unconscious Abu-Jamal to a nearby medical center after he experienced renal failure and blood glucose readings that had reached life-threatening levels.

The lawsuit also alleges that the state correctional institution neglected to treat conspicuous rashes and sores that appeared on his body last summer, which are known signs of liver failure associated with hep C. Abu-Jamal's lawyers also accuse prison hospital personnel of denying him access to friends, family, doctors and lawyers while he was receiving medical care.

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