Court Upholds Decision Allowing Mumia Abu-Jamal to Sue Prison Officials

Abu-Jamal spent years fighting for access to hepatitis C treatment in prison.

July 23, 2019 By Casey Halter

A federal appeals court in Pennsylvania has upheld a lower court ruling on a lawsuit filed by prisoner, journalist and social justice advocate Mumia Abu-Jamal, who spent years behind bars fighting for access to hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment, CBS News reports.

The decision handed down by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals states that Pennsylvania Corrections Department employees are not immune to being sued over their decisions regarding Abu-Jamal's treatment for hepatitis C.

Abu Jamal, 65, is facing a life sentence in prison after he was convicted for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia police officer. The former Black Panther spent most of his time behind bars on death row before having his sentence reduced in 2011 to life without parole. In 2012, Abu-Jamal tested positive for hepatitis C; three years later, he was rushed to the hospital for complications related to the disease. That's when Abu-Jamal, claiming he had been repeatedly denied treatment for HCV, sued for treatment. The federal judge in that case ordered he be treated immediately.

The lawsuit just upheld was filed in 2017 and alleges that by refusing him medical care, prison officials violated his Eighth Amendment protection against cruel and unusual punishment.

A trial date has not yet been set.

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