

Ray asks release; prosecutors demand confession

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — If James Earl Ray doesn't want to die in prison, he should admit he killed Martin Luther King Jr., a prosecutor said yesterday.

But a lawyer for Ray said that is out of the question.

"James Earl Ray will never admit to a crime he didn't commit," William Pepper said from his London office.

Ray, 70, pleaded guilty in 1969 to killing King in Memphis on April 4, 1968. He was sentenced to 99 years in prison and has been trying to take back the guilty plea ever since.

Seriously ill with liver disease, Ray last year asked for a medical furlough that allows inmates "in imminent peril of death" to go free.

The application was rejected last year by the state Department of Correction. A second application is being prepared.

Prosecutor John Campbell said authorities may look more favorably at Ray's request if he "would admit the obvious . . . and quit spinning these crazy stories."

"The approach they need to take is to lay it all out for the Department of Correction, let him admit what he

did based on the facts," Campbell said.

For much of the past year, Ray has been in poor health, suffering most notably from cirrhosis of the liver believed caused by hepatitis.

He was hospitalized on March 8 and slipped into a coma three days later. He regained consciousness March 13 and was in fair condition yesterday.

For years, Ray has claimed he was set up by a shadowy gun dealer he met in Montreal and knew only as Raoul. He has said his confession was coerced by lawyers.



James Earl Ray
... 99-year sentence