
NATIONAL REPORT

Judge Denies Bail for James Earl Ray

Chronicle News Services

Nashville, Tenn. — A judge refused yesterday to let James Earl Ray go free on bail to seek a liver transplant, an operation his lawyers say is his only hope of living long enough to pursue a trial in the slaying of Martin Luther King.

Ray's lawyers argued that without the operation he could be dead in months, but state Judge Cheryl Blackburn said they failed to produce evidence that Ray's guilty plea should be set aside so he could be granted a trial.

Ray, 69, is serving a 99-year sentence for the 1968 shooting death of King. Tennessee hospitals have refused to consider him as a transplant candidate because of his age, and prison officials won't let him travel out of state.

Blackburn also rejected Ray's request for a habeas corpus hearing, in which he contended that the state of Tennessee has been holding him illegally since his 1969 guilty plea in the King case.