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King's Assassin Needs Liver Transplant

■ MEMPHIS, Tenn.—James Earl Ray, jailed for the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., will die within months unless he gets a liver transplant, his lawyer said.

Ray, who is serving a 99-year sentence, has been hospitalized outside prison twice recently with chronic liver disease. He has been back in a state prison hospital since Jan. 3.

"His general health has to improve. There are a lot of conditions . . . but it is clear if he doesn't get that he will die," lawyer William Pepper said Friday.

Ray supporters who believe King was the victim of a conspiracy want to keep Ray alive to continue his effort to prove his innocence, Pepper said. They are searching for a potential donor who could provide a liver directly for Ray.

Ray, 68, is not on the national list that controls allocation of donated organs and a spokeswoman for a transplant agency said it could be illegal to go outside the system.

From news services
