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NASHVILLE, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray, who wants to disavow his admission of guilt in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has been denied an immediate meeting with a Memphis attorney at the state prison here.

Harry S. Avery, Tennessee commissioner of corrections, said Richard J. Ryan was turned away by prison officials Wednesday because he had not been officially retained as Ray's lawyer.

In another development, the Tennessee Supreme Court handed down a decision which could become a major hurdle for Ray in his bid to gain a new trial and overturn his 99-year sentence.

The court, in an opinion by Justice Allison B. Humphreys dealing with a burglary conviction, ruled that a convicted criminal cannot seek to invalidate a prison sentence on grounds he was misadvised by his attorney to plead guilty.

Jerry Ray, James' brother, said last week Ray would ask for a new trial on grounds he was "pressured" by his former attorney, Percy Foreman, into entering a guilty plea.

Foreman has denied he put pressure on Ray.

Ray's brother also said a Memphis lawyer had been asked to work on the new trial plea. He identified the attorney as "A. J. Ryman."

Prison sources said Ryan did not present a letter or other proof of contact with Ray when he arrived at the prison.

Avery said prison regulations allow only the prisoner's immediate family to visit during an initial six-week penitentiary processing period. That would mean Ray would not be able to have other visitors until sometime next month.

"As a courtesy we usually allow any attorney who has been officially retained to visit inmates at any time," said Avery.

"But we are not going to let in just any Tom, Dick and Harry who would like to represent him."

Referring to the state Supreme Court's ruling in the burglary case, one of Ray's prosecutors, Asst. Dist. Atty. Gen. Robert K. Dwyer, said it assures "more than ever that Ray's conviction will stand."

"It makes us rejoice, of course," said Dwyer. "But we were confident Ray's rights had been safeguarded. He had signed a written waiver of a jury trial, stating his plea of guilty was free, voluntary and without duress. He said the same thing in the eyes of the world in answering the trial judge's questions on the same points."

In Nashville, Avery disclosed that Ray's official biographer, author William Bradford Huie, also had been temporarily denied permission to visit the prisoner.

The commissioner said a telephoned request by the writer Monday was denied "at least until after the classification period."

The one person other than his brother who has been permitted to visit with Ray is Georgia attorney J. B. Stoner. He was allowed to visit because, Avery said, he traveled here at Ray's request and has been retained by Ray since last September.

Stoner says he is filing libel suits on Ray's behalf against some national publications but is not connected with criminal proceedings in the case.

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