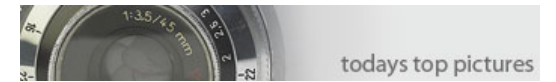


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Prisoner killed by LVF inmates over 'his police co-operation'

By Suzanne McGonagle and Stephanie Mc Guckin

08/04/08

An inquest into the "horrific and brutal" death of a murder suspect in jail has found he was killed by fellow LVF prisoners who believed he was co-operating with police.

David Oliver Keys (26) was found strangled in his cell just days after being remanded in custody charged with

the shocking killings of Damien Trainor and Philip Allen in Poyntzpass, Co Armagh.

Coroner John Leckey said yesterday he had been "murdered in a particularly brutal and sadistic way".

A postmortem examination revealed that Keys had died from strangulation before being hanged in the LVF wing of the Maze Prison on March 15 1998 in an apparent bid to make his death look like a suicide.

Belfast Coroner's Court also heard that he had been assaulted before being strangled and that his wrists were slit afterwards.

Mr Leckey said the injuries suffered by Keys, from Highfield Gardens in Banbridge, showed "the sheer brutality of the attack".

An investigation by the prison found that the victim had requested to be put on the LVF wing after being charged with the murders of Catholic man Damien Trainor and his Protestant friend Philip Allen.

The lifelong friends had been shot dead as they drank together in the Railway bar in Poyntzpass earlier that month. Keys was suspected of being the loyalist killers' getaway driver.

The prison report found that inmates on the block had agreed to the move and there was "nothing to indicate that Keys would have been at risk by entering this wing".

John Middlemiss from the PSNI Legacy Inquiry Unit told the inquest that letters were sent to 32 people on the wing at the time of the

murder requesting them to provide evidence to the inquest.

However, he said the vast majority had not replied, while others refused to give evidence or claimed to know nothing about the murder.

No former prisoners gave evidence yesterday.

Mr Middlemiss said it was his opinion that Keys was murdered by fellow prisoners.

He confirmed that after the loyalist had admitted his part in the double murders, he had provided police with information about the

investigation, adding that it was "a very fair assumption" that this had led to his death.

A jury yesterday unanimously found that Keys had been murdered by other prisoners on the LVF wing.


It also found that there was nothing more the prison service could have done to prevent his death.

Mr Leckey said it was "one of the most horrific and barbaric murders that occurred in the course of 30 years of

violence and what made it more unique was that it occurred in prison".

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