

JCFJ MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Death Following Attempted Suicide in Cork Prison Preventable

Yesterday, the Office of the Inspector of Prisons published the investigation report of the death of a young father of two who died by suicide on 7th October 2020. 'Mr K' died in hospital after making an attempt on his life in Cork Prison nine days earlier.

The Inspector's report highlighted troubling issues with Mr K's committal to Cork Prison in relation to known risks and the subsequent management of these risks. During Mr K's four previous committals to prison, Risk and Alerts forms had been completed by nursing staff each time to notify other colleagues of concerns. The two most recent Risk and Alerts forms in April 2018 and February 2019 included notes highlighting an "attempted hanging while in Garda custody." No entry in the Risks and Alerts form was made in September 2020 during Mr K's final committal to prison.

Death in custody investigations often reveal the sharp points of operational failures. Despite information of previous suicide attempts having been collected during previous committals, Mr K was permitted to "retain his own clothes, including his footwear with laces," and accommodated in a cell with a tubular framed bunk bed, providing a usable and effective ligature point. This report reveals that, despite known risks of self-harm being collected during previous committals, crucial information was not easily available to staff or acted upon to prevent the loss of life. Even as Mr K's mental health deteriorated in the days up to his suicide attempt - medical notes recorded that he was "suffering delusions" and "hallucinating"- his situation remained unchanged despite a risk assessment for Special Observation being considered.

Keith Adams, Penal Policy Advocate at the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice says: "The death of Mr K is another profoundly sad and distressing story of yet another suicide within our prisons. In a fundamental way, this death in custody bears similarities with the case of Monika Nawrat who died the year before. Many people are committed to prison during the most chaotic periods of their lives, times shaped by mental ill-health, addiction, and past trauma. Yet again, we see the consequence of this practice of imprisonment when holistic

therapeutic supports should be available in the community.”

He continues, “Mr K’s death in our prisons raises the question of the Government’s ability to comply with Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights ensuring the right to life. Safe and humane custody is the bare minimum requirement of any criminal justice system and the State must take appropriate measures to safeguard life. Despite a commitment in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy in 2015 to ‘ensure that access to ligature points in cells is minimised,’ deaths by suicide within our prisons continue.”

ENDS

Links:

[Death in Custody Investigation Report and Irish Prison Service Action Plan relating to the death of Mr K 2020](#)

For Further Information, contact:

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About the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice

The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice is an agency of the Irish Jesuit Province, dedicated to undertaking social analysis and theological reflection in relation to issues of social justice, including housing and homelessness, penal policy, environmental justice, and economic ethics. Established in 1978 by a small group of Jesuits living and working in Ballymun, on the northside of Dublin city, the Centre was intended to promote social justice and critically examine issues of structural injustice and poverty.