

PRISON VAN TURNED AWAY AS PROTESTERS BLOCK ENTRY TO STYAL PRISON

- Four-hour demonstration, to protest against the death of mother-of-two, Valerie Hayes, 42, who died in the 'care' of Styal Prison on 10.05.06.
- Protesters [from Cheshire, Shropshire, Greater Manchester, and London] included representatives from 'No More Prison', and FRFI (Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism).
- Floral tributes were laid in memory of Ms Hayes, including a bouquet of flowers from London based charity "Women in Prison".
- 2.52 pm: prison van MX55 BHW (GSL: Global Solutions) was stopped as it attempted to take prisoners into the jail.
- Cheshire Constabulary "Area Support Group" arrived at 3.05 pm (one sergeant; 5 constables), but were unsuccessful in persuading the protesters to allow the vehicle's entry into the jail.
- 3.20 pm: prison van turned round, left Styal Prison, and departed for HMP Altcourse.
- Sgt 1512 informed protesters that the prison van had gone to Altcourse to enable prisoners to gain access to toilet facilities; he referred to the need to comply with the Human Rights Act; when asked why no arrests were being made, he replied "that's the last thing we want to do", adding that it would have been "disproportionate" to have arrested anyone.
- All police had left the scene by 3.40 pm.
- 4 pm: a further prison van - MV54 FFR (GSL) - was stopped as it attempted to take prisoners into the jail.
- At 4.30 pm, protesters allowed the vehicle into the prison on humanitarian grounds: (i) prisoner in need of inhaler: *The Guardian's* prisons correspondent, Eric Allison, spoke to the driver and was told "she needs her inhaler". However, when asked by Mr Allison why an inhaler was not on board, the driver made no reply; (ii) prisoner on board had apparently travelled from North Wales, and had been in the van for 4 hours without a comfort stop [we were informed that the prisoner had been offered a comfort stop one hour previously, but had declined].
- Police returned to the jail a second time, and were still in attendance at the entrance to the prison when protesters left at 5 pm.
- Demonstration, covered by local radio stations, was attended by *The Guardian's* prisons correspondent, local press & photographers.

Comment:

"Valerie Hayes, mother-of-two, was the 4th woman to die in the 'care' of HMP Styal since my daughter's death in January 2003. It is deeply worrying that the Chief Inspector of Prisons report on Styal, published the day before Ms Hayes' death, described an "overcrowded and under-resourced" jail that had failed to implement eight out of 12 recommendations to prevent women trying to hurt or kill themselves.

"My daughter's death in 2003 highlighted a great injustice whereby women are being detained in prisons that cannot meet their human needs. This is an ongoing problem which must be addressed as a matter of urgency by the new Home Secretary John Reid, if further deaths are to be prevented.

"It is of the utmost concern that the prisoner on board prison van MV54 FFR, who was owed a *legal duty of care*, had been on board for 4 hours without access to an inhaler."

Pauline Campbell

[Mother of Sarah Elizabeth Campbell, 18, who died in the 'care' of HMP Styal, 18.01.03]
Trustee of The Howard League for Penal Reform
Awarded The 2005 Emma Humphreys Memorial Prize