

Zein Isa Dies In Hospital; Fatally Stabbed Daughter

By Kim Bell

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JEFFERSON CITY — Death-row inmate Zein Isa, who stabbed his 16-year-old daughter to death in St. Louis in 1989, died Friday at a hospital after a long illness.

Mr. Isa, 65, suffered from diabetes and other ailments, but prison officials declined to say what specifically caused his death.

He died at 3:40 a.m. Friday at Boone Hospital Center in Columbia, Mo., where he had been guarded by corrections officers around the clock for about a week.

"He did have a number of illnesses and finally succumbed," said Tim Kniest, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections. "In the last week, he had deteriorated to the point where we couldn't take care of him at the institution so he was moved to the hospital."

An autopsy was not conducted because it is against Arab customs and the family did not want one, said Dr.

Jay Dix, Boone County medical examiner.

Dix said the state did not force the issue because Mr. Isa died of natural causes in a hospital.

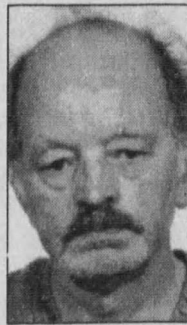
Mr. Isa had been on death row for five years. The Missouri Supreme Court had been scheduled to hear Mr. Isa's attorney's arguments next week on why his death sentence was unfair.

Mr. Isa and his wife, Maria Isa, were tried together and convicted of murdering their daughter, Tina.

Prosecutors said Maria Isa held her daughter while Zein Isa stabbed her repeatedly during a quarrel. The parents were upset that Tina resisted Islamic traditions and embraced American ways, prosecutors said.

The slaying on Nov. 5, 1989, at the Isas' apartment in St. Louis was captured on audio tape by the FBI. The FBI had wiretapped the apartment because of suspicion that Zein Isa was connected to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Missouri Supreme Court reversed the death penalty for Maria Isa in 1993 because the jury got flawed instructions at trial. The court ordered her to be re-sentenced, but that has yet to be done. She is being held at a state prison in Chillicothe.



Zein Isa