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Without Notifying Parents, Dept. of Justice Will Hold Press Conference Tuesday To Give Autopsy Details of Baby Who Died at Queen Louise Home for Children

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Rhonda Jeremiah, mother of deceased 22-month-old boy. By. VI CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Department of Justice is hosting a press conference on Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. to stream live autopsy results of the 22-month-old boy who died at Queen Louise Home for Children. The boy's mother and father will learn of the results along with the rest of the community, as the V.I. D.O.J. or the V.I. Department of Human Services as of Monday night had not provided the results to the mother or father.

"Everyone will know what happened to my son without us knowing anything as his parents," said Rhonda Jeremiah, the boy's mother who spent months battling D.H.S. to regain custody of her

son. "I feel like it is so much more to this."

In its release this evening, the V.I. Dept. of Justice said "Officials will announce the results of the DOJ Medical Examiner's investigation into the cause and manner of death of 22-month-old Tamir Lake. Lake died in the care of the Dept. of Human Service's Queen Louise Home for Children on May 5, 2020."

The event will be live-streamed on Facebook at [Facebook.com/AGDeniseGeorge](https://www.facebook.com/AGDeniseGeorge).

Ms. Jeremiah's court-appointed counsel, Akeel St. Jean, described the V.I. D.O.J.'s decision as shocking. "The government's decision to call a press conference to discuss the autopsy report before giving the mother even a courtesy call shocks the conscience. No mother should have to receive information about her child's death via a news presser. This is egregious conduct."

About the case

Ms. Jeremiah [sat for a live interview](#) with the Consortium a week ago where she detailed a plight that concluded with the death of her son. The boy, who would have been 2 years old in July, had a number of complications at birth, because he was born prematurely. She said she made many visits to the Juan F. Luis Hospital for a multiple of issues the boy faced, and revealed that she really only had one month and a half with her child, as he had spent three months at JFL after being born.

Determining that the child needed deeper evaluation, he was airlifted to the Miami Children's Hospital in Florida. "I traveled with him and was there along the way for every Xray, every test," the mother said.

"Maybe within a few hours of me reaching to the hospital, certain injuries were found on my child — unexplainable injuries to me. They said they were healing fractures. I never mishandled my child so it was strange to hear that this is what was going on with him, to the point where they were actually healing," Ms. Jeremiah said.

Following a number of tests at the Florida hospital, the state's Child Protective Services stepped in. From that point, Ms. Jeremiah said she went through a series of ordeals. "I had to go to court twice in Miami. I was actually kicked out of the hospital, told to leave [and that] I can't be around my child. And it has just been a fight ever since. It was just never a full investigation as to why he was like this," she said emotionally, fighting to hold back tears.

Yet even with all the tests and X-rays performed, Ms. Jeremiah said she was never provided with the results. And the fractured bones the doctors in Florida spoke about was even stranger, she said, because there were no visible outward injuries.

Ms. Jeremiah said it wasn't until the boy returned to St. Croix and was placed at the Queen Louise Home for Children, that certain complications started surfacing. One of his limbs was shorter than the other; his left ear was lower than the right one, the mother said. She further stated that none of those issues were mentioned to her in Florida.

Before the ordeal started, the mother said she took her son to the clinic on multiple occasions after realizing he had feeding issues. She also took him to WIC, where he was measured. "A close family member actually saw his head maybe two or three days after me coming home with him. I was out doing some shopping and she was wondering why the [Juan F. Luis Hospital] didn't mention anything of his head because it was abnormally shaped," Ms. Jeremiah said.

After fighting to regain custody of her son and finding little success in Florida, Ms. Jeremiah said the same situation continued when he was sent back to the territory. She said there has never been a full investigation as to why the boy suffered with the various ailments, including bone issues.

"For the past two years I have been fighting with the Department of Human Services to get my son back," Ms. Jeremiah said.

Ms. Jeremiah, who has two other children, complained that if she was a threat to her son, why were her other children still within her care. She said attempts for meetings with Dept. of Human Services Commissioner Kimberly Causey-Gomez were unsuccessful.

The boy's mother only availability to her young son was visits at Queen Louise Home for Children, where she said he wasn't well taken care of — not necessarily because there was willful mistreatment, but because, she said, the workers did not know how to deal with a child whose challenges were manifold.

"While he was there, both me and dad saw a lot of different stuff. Him not being fed on time, being held up. This was a child who was very straight, very stiff; you couldn't just put him to sit down and prop him up like a regular baby. It wasn't until last year that I found out that his side that was underdeveloped, the left leg was popping out of place at his hip."

On the morning of May 5, about 11:55, both Ms. Jeremiah and her son's father, received a call from D.H.S. a few minutes apart. Ms. Jeremiah said she was asked to immediately come to Queen Louise. Asked why, they said it was because her son had died.

"I just hung up the phone, flew down there. By the time I got there my child was already in the back of the [medical examiner's] truck ready to go in."