

# Inquiry urged in wake of Timol inquest

STAFF REPORTER

**TWO professors of law yesterday said a commission of inquiry should be set up to probe detention without trial. One suggested that a doctor should regularly examine detainees.**

Professor John Dugard, professor of law at the University of the Witwatersrand, said detainees should be examined on admission and at weekly intervals by a private doctor, acceptable to both the family and the State.

"Until some safeguard of this nature is introduced, public disquiet will not be eased," he said.

He was commenting on a suggestion of the Timol inquest magistrate, Mr. J. J. L. de Villiers, that detainees be examined as soon as possible after their arrest by a district surgeon for any signs of assault.

Mr. Timol, who was being held under Section Six of the Terrorism Act, fell to his death from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square in October last year.

His death, and the spate of terrorism detentions at the time, sparked off nation-wide protests against the detention system and calls for a judicial commission of inquiry into police methods of detention and interrogation.

Prof. Dugard said the need for a judicial commission of inquiry was "just as great now

as it was when Mr. Timol died. "An inquest, by its nature, could not carry out the type of inquiry required."

Professor Barend van Niekerk, professor of law at the University of Natal, said a commission of inquiry, consisting of several judges and preferably two or more people nominated by the General Bar Council, should be the minimum demand of South Africans following the Timol inquest.

"The doubts linger on," he said. "Seventeen people have died while being held under the Terrorism Act. This fact alone should be sufficient in any country where justice is done, to bring the Government down."

"But here we do not even appoint a commission of inquiry."

"Civilised South Africans should call not for better treatment of detainees, but the removal of the menace of the Terrorism Act from our statute book," he said.

Meanwhile no comment could be obtained yesterday from police sources on the suggestion of the Timol inquest magistrate, Mr. J. J. L. de Villiers, that detainees be examined as soon as possible after their arrest by a district surgeon for any signs of assault.

According to his private secretary, the Minister of Police, Mr. Louwrens Muller, had no comment to make. General Tiny Venter, head of the Security Police, also refused to comment.

The Commissioner of Police, General G. J. Joubert, was out of town and not available.

## 'ABUSE'

Mrs. Helen Suzman, Progressive Party MP for Houghton, said that a Government "with any conscience whatsoever" would hold an immediate and full-scale inquiry into the methods of interrogation and the treatment of detainees.

"The history of deaths by suicide and unknown causes of people in detention is such that even more so a decent Government would immediately suspend the operation of the Terrorism Act."

The renewed call was also backed by Nusas.