

Timol will not die

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There is now a generation to whom the name Ahmed Timol will not mean a great deal. But his death in 1971 made front-page headlines. The same applied to the subsequent high-profile inquest.

While being held under section 6 of the Terrorism Act, which provided for indefinite detention, Timol fell to his death from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square in very suspicious circumstances. The inquest court found that nobody could be held responsible. Understandably, this left his family, comrades and community very angry.

This week the school at which Timol taught on the West Rand was named after him. We share in the poignancy of that event and can only endorse President Mandela's view that the pupils have a fine role model and that "the best way they can honour Timol's memory is by ensuring that our democracy remains strong and that it brings a better life for all".

Ahmed Timol's name will now live on, but not only in bricks and mortar. After his death there could no longer be any pretence of adherence to the rule of law in what amounted to a police state. His sacrifice was enormous but significant in the context of the struggle against oppression.