

Another name on a sad, sad list

THE DEATH FALL of Ahmed Timol on Wednesday afternoon has brought the number of known deaths in detention without trial to 17.

The number of deaths which have been given by the police, or found by inquest magistrates, to be suicide, is now 10.

All 17 men died while being detained without trial under either the 90-day clause, the subsequent 180-day clause or the Terrorism Act.

One death is totally unexplained — even to the extent of the name of the detainee and the date on which he died.

The remaining six deaths have been officially given as, or found to be in court, to be due to natural or unascertainable causes.

In one instance, the inquest magistrate could not conclude that anyone was to blame for the death of a man whom, a doctor said, bore injuries which he thought resulted from assault. Police evidence was that he fell while taking a shower.

In another, the inquest magistrate found that the detainee died from injuries caused, partly by an accidental fall following interrogation.

The man who fell was the Moslem leader, Imam Abdullah Haron. He died in custody on September 27 last year. He had been in custody for four months, having been detained on May 28 under the 180-day clause.

The court was told that the Security Police had reliable information that the Imam had been involved in unlawful political and terrorist activities.

Security Police evidence was the Imam slipped and fell down the last few steps of a flight of stairs after interrogation on September 19. He did not appear to have been hurt. They denied any knowledge of assaults on the Imam.

According to the post-mortem report, the Imam had 26 separate bruises on his body, a blood-swelling on his back and a fractured rib.

The pathologist who made the report said in court that

the bruises were widespread and that some were older than others. He said that they could not all have been caused by the fall. Excluding the possibilities of self-infliction or a fall, assault would then have been a "probability".

The magistrate found that the Imam died as a result of injuries partly caused by an accidental fall down a flight of stairs. He said that, on the available evidence, he could not say how the other injuries were caused.

The Imam's widow was paid R5 000 by the State on an ex-gratia basis following the death of her husband.

Mthayeni Cuthsela, an elderly Transkei resident, was detained by Security Police at his kraal on December 21, 1970 and taken to Umtata. On January 21 a doctor found him to be seriously ill, police said, and he was admitted to hospital where he died soon afterwards of natural causes. The detainee's son said when he was taken to the hospital by police, his father's body was already in a closed, nailed coffin.

Michael Shivute's death was revealed by the Minister of Police, Mr. S. L. Muller, in Parliament last month. He said that the man died by suicide, on June 16, the night of his detention under the Terrorism Act.

Jacob Monnakgolla's death was disclosed at the trial of 10 Africans charged under the Terrorism Act following tribal unrest in the Transvaal. He died the night before the start of the trial. According to police at the trial, his death was due to natural causes. A district surgeon found that the man died from thrombosis. During the trial terrorism charges were withdrawn against the surviving accused.

Caleb Mavesiko died of natural causes, 18 days after his detention under the Terrorism Act on May 13, according to the Minister of Police. James Lenkoe was found

hanging by a belt from the window of his prison cell on March 10 last year, five days after his detention. Traces of copper were found in a wound on his toe.

Four pathologists, one of them from overseas, said that the toe wound could have been caused by an electric burn. Security Police witnesses denied that detainees were given electric shock treatment. The inquest magistrate found the cause, or apparent cause, of death was suicide by hanging, that no blame was attached to any person and that the allegation that electric shock contributed to his death was not proved.

Solomon Modipane died approximately three days after his arrest on February 25 last year. There was no inquest. A magistrate endorsed a post-mortem report that death was due to natural causes. Police spokesmen said he slipped on a piece of soap.

Nicodimus Kgoathe died on February 2 last year after having been in custody since November 7, 1968. He spent two weeks in hospital before his death. A post-mortem showed he died of bronchial pneumonia. The doctor who had him admitted to hospital said at the inquest he found various injuries which he thought were the result of assault. A police sergeant said that Kgoathe claimed he had been assaulted by the Security Police during interrogation. Security Police evidence was that the detainee fell while taking a shower. The inquest magistrate said he was unable, on the evidence before him, to conclude that any person was to blame for the death.

J. B. Tshakwe died on September 11, 1968, the day after his detention. The verdict was suicide by hanging.

Ah Yan was found hanging by socks from the water pipe of a shower cubicle in a police cell on January 5, 1967. He was detained probably in

either November or December, 1966. The inquest verdict was suicide by hanging and that nobody was to blame.

Leong Yim Pin died by suicide by hanging on November 19, 1966, after three days in detention.

Hangula Shonyeka's death by suicide was mentioned, without his name, by the Minister of Justice in 1967. In September 1970 the Minister of Police named Shonyeka in Parliament. He said he was detained in Pretoria Prison on August 30, 1966, and committed suicide on October 9, 1966.

James Hamakwayo's death was due to suicide by hanging, according to evidence in a Terrorism Trial. He was detained on August 26, 1966, but the date of his death is not known.

Suliman Saloojee died after falling seven floors from the then Security Police headquarters in Johannesburg on September 9, 1964, two months after his detention. A Security policeman, who refused to answer some of the defence questions, denied that the man had been assaulted. The magistrate found that the man died of multiple injuries after a fall during interrogation. He could not say whether Saloojee committed suicide or was trying to escape but there was nothing in the evidence to suggest assault or other irregularities.

"Looksmart" Solwandle Nkundle died on September 5, 1963, after some three weeks in detention. He was found hanging by a pyjama cord and a jersey in a police cell. Allegations of assault on detainees were made and a magistrate who visited Nkundle said the man complained of having been assaulted. The inquest finding was suicide with no blame attached to anyone.

Unknown. An unknown man died on an unknown date, of cause unknown. His death was disclosed, without detail, in Parliament.