

Media Articles: Build up to the Re-Opening of the Ahmed Timol Inquest

Contents

Ahmed Timol inquest reopened 2 days before 45th anniversary of his death .	1
Dates set for Ahmed Timol inquest, 45 years after his death in police custody	3
Timol family hopes inquest will restore his legacy, dignity and honour	5
Inquest into anti-apartheid activist's death to be reopened	8

Ahmed Timol inquest reopened 2 days before 45th anniversary of his death

2016-10-26 22:05 Tammy Petersen, News24

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/ahmed-timol-inquest-reopened-2-days-before-45th-anniversary-of-his-death-20161026>

Cape Town - An inquest into the death of teacher and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol who died in police custody 45 years ago will be reopened by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA).

After being ruled a suicide in 1972, a private investigation launched by Timol's family into his death uncovered new evidence which it presented to the NPA, asking for the inquest to be reopened.

According to the Timol Family Trust, the NPA agreed that there was compelling evidence and said it would investigate.

"The National Director of Public Prosecutions has requested the minister of justice to approach the Judge President of the Gauteng High Court to allocate a judge for the hearing of the inquest," the trust said in a statement.

The Roodepoort teacher's loved ones did not believe Timol, the 22nd person to die in police custody, had jumped from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square while being interrogated by security police.

"It wasn't in his character to give up. They believe he was either tortured to death and thrown from the window, or pushed," the trust said on Wednesday.

"But despite the presentation of medical evidence of gruesome torture, the magistrate who conducted the inquest at the height of apartheid bought the security police version that they had treated Timol compassionately, and found that nobody could be held responsible for his death."

Timol left South Africa in December 1966 to perform Hajj in Saudi Arabia and moved on to London where he linked up with his exiled friends, Essop and Aziz Pahad.

Mother 'smiling in heaven'

He underwent political training at the Lenin School in the Soviet Union in 1969, accompanied by Thabo Mbeki and Anne Nicholson. He returned to SA in 1970 where he built underground structures for the banned ANC and SACP.

"On the evening of October 22, 1971, Timol accompanied by medical student, Saleem Essop, were stopped at a police roadblock in Coronationville. Timol and Saleem were taken to the Newlands Police Station where they were separated and later taken to the John Vorster Square police station.

"Four days and 19 hours later, police alleged that Timol jumped to his death. By then, Essop was in hospital after being tortured to an inch of his life," the trust said.

The Timol family was on Tuesday informed of the decision to reopen the inquest.

Timol's nephew Imtiaz Ahmed Cajee paid tribute to Timol's mother, Hawa Timol, who appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 to plead for her son's case to be reopened.

"My grandmother has since passed away, but she will be smiling in heaven today," Cajee said.

He said intensive investigations left the family convinced members of SAPS' then security branch were responsible for the death, and substantive information was forwarded to the head of the priority crimes litigation unit of the NPA.

Cajee said reopening the inquest would provide details of what transpired on the last days of his uncle's life.

"Other important outstanding questions related to Timol's movements in the days leading up to his arrest. Was his underground operation compromised by an informer? And, was the police roadblock at which he was arrested staged to appear that the arrest was accidental?" the trust asked.

In commemoration of the 45th anniversary of his death, the Ahmed Timol Exhibition will be opened in Ginsberg, King Williams Town.

The trust said it hoped the inquest will set precedent for other families to follow.

Dates set for Ahmed Timol inquest, 45 years after his death in police custody

2017-05-30 13:33 Jenna Etheridge, News24

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/dates-set-for-ahmed-timol-inquest-45-years-after-his-death-in-police-custody-20170530>

Cape Town – A judge has been appointed to oversee the inquest that was reopened into the death of teacher and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, who died in police custody 45 years ago.

The Judge President of the South Gauteng High Court has appointed Judge Billy Mothle, the Ahmed Timol Family Trust and the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) said on Tuesday.

The inquest will be held at the High Court between June 26 and June 30, and then resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11.

"Our immediate priority is to have the apartheid era inquest finding of 'nobody to blame' reversed," said Timol's nephew Imtiaz Ahmed Cajee.

"My grandmother was humiliated by Magistrate de Villiers and branded a liar when she testified how a security branch officer told her that she had not given her son a hiding when growing up and that they were going to do this for her. My grandmother has since passed away, but she will be smiling at the news of the reopening of the inquest."

After being ruled a suicide in 1972, a private investigation launched by Timol's family uncovered new evidence which it presented to the National Prosecuting Authority, asking for the inquest to be reopened.

The Roodepoort teacher's loved ones did not believe Timol, the 22nd person to die in police custody, had jumped from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square while being interrogated by security police.

"It wasn't in his character to give up. They believe he was either tortured to death and thrown from the window, or pushed," the trust said previously.

"But despite the presentation of medical evidence of gruesome torture, the magistrate who conducted the inquest at the height of apartheid bought the security police version that they had treated Timol compassionately, and found that nobody could be held responsible for his death."

Timol's death

Timol left South Africa in December 1966 to perform Hajj in Saudi Arabia and moved on to London where he linked up with his exiled friends, Essop and Aziz Pahad.

He underwent political training at the Lenin School in the Soviet Union in 1969, accompanied by Thabo Mbeki and Anne Nicholson. He returned to SA in 1970, where he built underground structures for the banned ANC and SACP.

"On the evening of October 22, 1971, Timol - accompanied by medical student, Saleem Essop - were stopped at a police roadblock in Coronationville. Timol and Saleem were taken

to the Newlands Police Station where they were separated and later taken to the John Vorster Square police station.

"Four days and 19 hours later, police alleged that Timol jumped to his death. By then, Essop was in hospital after being tortured to an inch of his life," the trust said.

The Ditsong Museum in Pretoria will host an Ahmed Timol exhibition from July 5.

Timol family hopes inquest will restore his legacy, dignity and honour

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/timol-family-hopes-inquest-will-restore-his-legacy-dignity-and-honour-20170621-2>

Mpho Raborife, News24 2017-06-21 23:09

Johannesburg - The family of teacher and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, who died in police custody 45 years ago, believe that the reopening of an inquest docket into his death will help them clarify what really happened, and restore his legacy, dignity and honour.

After being ruled a suicide in 1972, a private investigation launched by Timol's family into his death uncovered new evidence, which it presented to the NPA, asking for the inquest to be reopened.

According to the Timol Family Trust, the NPA agreed that there was compelling evidence and said it would investigate.

Timol's nephew, Imtiaz Cajee, told reporters at a briefing on Wednesday, ahead of the hearings which will begin on June 26, that all his family wanted was to prove that the findings were wrong.

The Roodepoort teacher's loved ones did not believe Timol, the 22nd person to die in apartheid police custody, had jumped from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square while being interrogated by security police.

"I am often asked, but why over 45 years after his death, 23 years since the birth of democracy, and over 16 years after the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC), do we still continue pursuing this particular matter?"

"Firstly, it's important for us to reflect correctly the angles of our history, that my uncle did not commit suicide and that the magistrate's findings were incorrect," Cajee said.

"We feel that Magistrate De Villiers was biased in his findings and that he protected the security branch officers in our view, that were responsible for my uncle's death.

"So to preserve my uncle's honour, his legacy, his dignity, and the only way to accomplish this would be to get the findings inquest reversed," Cajee said.

'Magistrate branded her a liar'

The second reason was to restore the honour and dignity of Timol's mother and his maternal grandmother, Hawa, who had testified during the initial inquest into her son's death, and who was subsequently branded as a liar, he said.

"[During the inquest], she recollected one of her encounters with the security branch officers who had told her that she had failed to give her son a good hiding.

"Within a day later, they returned to the flat to tell her that her son was killed. And when she testified this during the inquest, the magistrate branded her a liar."

Hawa Timol died in 1997, after testifying for the second time in 1996, Cajee said.

"So I think it's important again for her own honour and her own legacy and dignity, to restore the dignity by taking it back to an inquest that will clearly demonstrate, in our view, that my uncle did not commit suicide and that he was murdered."

Cajee expressed his family's deepest gratitude to the Foundation for Human Rights, which had helped them fund most of the investigations and research into finding more evidence to present to the NPA.

'It has to be the responsibility of the ruling party'

He criticised government, as well as the ANC, for failing to assist families to find closure regarding the whereabouts of their loved ones who had died at the hands of the apartheid regime.

"Our thoughts go out to all the other families that are seeking closure. We have a grave to go to as the Timol family, but... many many other families throughout the country, that till today are searching for remains, purely remains, not looking at prosecution, not looking at hunting perpetrators, not looking at seeing them [perpetrators] sentenced when they are 70 and 80 and 90-years-old, but purely looking for remains," he said.

He said it was unfortunate that, while these families were trying to find closure, they were forced to do this independently and individually, with no assistance from government.

"It cannot be the responsibility of the foundation to help every individual family in this country to find closure, to find justice.

"It has to be the responsibility of the government of the day. It has to be the responsibility of the ruling party because these cadres that were killed... were all members of the ANC and the alliance," Cajee said.

"Surely the state cannot abdicate its responsibility. It has to fulfil its responsibility because we owe it to our freedom fighters who have not witnessed our democracy, who are not enjoying the fruits of democracy that we are enjoying today, that surely we have to preserve their memory," he said.

Inquest into anti-apartheid activist's death to be reopened

KHAYA KOKO Crime & Courts | 21 June 2017, 4:22pm

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/inquest-into-anti-apartheid-activists-death-to-be-reopened-9903941>

Johannesburg - The quest to uncover apartheid's suspicious deaths and disappearances could be given a boost with next week's reopening of the inquest into the death of activist Ahmed Timol.

Timol died in police custody in October 1971 at the notorious John Vorster Square, currently Johannesburg police station, after being arrested along with his comrade and friend Salim Essop, when they were both caught with banned ANC and SACP literature in the car they were travelling in.

The apartheid police said Timol committed suicide when he "jumped" out of the window of the police station's 10th floor.

However, according to the family, during the washing of Timol's body for Muslim burial rites, they observed that his neck was broken, his fingernails taken out and his elbow was burnt.

An inquest was opened by the apartheid State, where a Magistrate De Villiers ruled in June 1972 that Timol had committed suicide and details of his alleged brutal torture were omitted.

This is what the family seeks to overturn with next week's inquest starting on Monday at the High Court in Joburg.

Judge Billy Mothe will oversee the reopened inquest, where the final dates will be August 10 and 11.

Family spokesperson Imtiaz Cajee, who is Timol's maternal nephew, said the case reopening aims to get dignity for Timol's mother; Cajee's maternal grandmother.

"My grandmother was humiliated by Magistrate De Villiers and branded a liar when she testified how a security branch officer told her that she had not given her son a hiding when he was growing up and that they were going to do this for her," Cajee said.

He added that this inquest, should it have a positive outcome for them, will be a milestone which opens up other cases of apartheid mysterious murders and disappearances.

This case is supported by the Foundation for Human Rights, and involves three investigators and more than 10 witness, including esteemed Lawyer Gerge Bizos.

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