

Media Articles: Re-Opening of Ahmed Timol Inquest - 26th June 2017

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Activist Ahmed Timol's inquest set to begin

Amanda Khoza, News24 - 2017-06-26 07:11

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/activist-ahmed-timols-inquest-set-to-begin-20170626>

Johannesburg – The first sitting of the inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist, Ahmed Timol, is set to begin at the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday.

This comes after the inquest into the death of the teacher, who died in police custody 45 years ago, was reopened by the National Prosecuting Authority.

Timol's death was ruled a suicide in 1972. However, 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.

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

Judge Billy Mothle will oversee the inquest.

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 (now called the Johannesburg Central Police Station) while being interrogated by security police.

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 then banned ANC and SACP.

Brother recalls Ahmed Timol tragedy

News | 26 June 2017, 11:36pm - Khaya Koko

<http://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/brother-recalls-ahmed-timol-tragedy-9985536>

“My father was a lot stronger, but my mother relived this pain throughout her life.”

These were the sorrowful words of Mohammed Timol, describing how his parents dealt with the mysterious and tragic death of his older brother Ahmed at the hands of apartheid security police in 1971.

Mohammed spoke to Independent Media on the sidelines of the reopened inquest into his brother's death, which began yesterday in the Johannesburg High Court.

The inquest brought by Timol's family aims at overturning a June 1972 ruling by magistrate JL De Villiers that Timol had committed suicide by jumping out of the 10th floor of the infamous John Vorster Square, now known as Johannesburg Central Police Station.

The presiding officer in the reopened inquest, Judge J Mothle, said in court yesterday that he had no doubt this process would rekindle painful memories.

Two witnesses were called to give testimony in court yesterday, where gruesome details emerged from Dr Salim Essop about how he was “brutally tortured” by security police at John Vorster Square.

Essop was arrested with Ahmed after a car they were travelling in was stopped by apartheid police. Banned SACP and ANC literature was found in the car.

Essop told the court about a range of torture tactics that were meted out against him, including having a plastic bag tied around his head to a point where he felt like he was

suffocating, being kicked repeatedly in a method known as “mule kickers”, and being subjected to electric shock that caused him “excruciating pain”.

Essop added that he was held upside down on the 10th floor of the notorious prison after being subjected to roughly five days of torture and was told he would be dropped.

“I was in such pain (that) if they (police) dropped me at that moment, it would’ve been fine.”

It also emerged from the inquest’s investigating officer Captain Benjamin Nel that only three officials involved in Timol’s mysterious death were still alive.

They are Warrant Officer N Els, who was called to identify the communist documents found with Timol and Essop; Sergeant J Rodrigues, who was a clerk at John Vorster Square; and Sergeant JP Fourie, who worked at the State mortuary.

The inquest will continue today with an on-sight inspection of the old John Vorster Square.

Ahmed Timol inquest due to be heard today

Staff Reporter Politics | 26 June 2017, 10:33am

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/ahmed-timol-inquest-due-to-be-heard-today-9977157>

Pretoria - The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation welcomes the reopening of the inquest into the death of teacher and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, one of many who lost their lives while in police custody.

Today will see the case reopening before Judge Billy Mothle at the Gauteng High Court, Johannesburg.

The inquest comes 45 years following the 30-year-old's death in police detention after he fell 10 stories from a window at the notorious John Vorster Square Police Station, now called Johannesburg Central.

“We support the Timol family’s bringing forward of new evidence to support the view their son was killed and that the magistrate who ruled that his death was a suicide had erred,” said executive director of the Foundation, Neeshan Balton.

#AhmedTimol inquest gets underway

News | 26 June 2017, 12:08pm - KHAYA KOKO

<http://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/ahmedtimol-inquest-gets-underway-9978917>

Johannesburg - Three of the 23 police officers believed to have been involved in the mysterious death of Ahmed Timol are still alive.

This was the revelation made by Captain Ben Nel during the reopened inquest at the High Court in Joburg on Monday Morning.

Timol died in 1971 and the official statement at the time was that he had fallen from the 10th floor of the the infamous John Vorster Square, currently Johannesburg police station.

Timol had been arrested along with his comrade and friend Dr Salim Essop after they were caught with banned ANC and SACP literature in the car they were travelling in.

Captain Nel, in his testimony, revealed that Warrant Officer N Els, Sergeant J Roderigues and Sergeant UP Fourie were the only apartheid State survivors of Timol's suspected eerie death.

Nel was the investigating officer who wrote a memorandum in October 2015 that there was a need to reopen the inquest into Timol's death.

Els was called to identify the banned literature and said the documents were indeed communist in nature.

Roderigues was a clerk at John Vorster Square, who said Timol jumped out of the window after hearing that the police had found a certain "Mr X", who was going to testify that Timol was planning a "communist overthrow" of the apartheid regime

Fourie was an assistant state mortuary curator, who received Timol's battered mortal remains upon arrival.

Nel, who has been an officer for 30 years, added that he interviewed Essop in 2015 which led him to conclude that there was evidence to reopen the inquest.

@khayakoko88.

Here's why the inquest into Ahmed Timol's death is so important

Avantika Seeth 2017-06-26 15:07

<http://city-press.news24.com/News/heres-why-the-inquest-into-ahmed-timols-death-is-so-important-20170626>

This morning saw the opening stages of a momentous case that is being heard before the South Gauteng High Court – the reopening of the inquest into the death of freedom fighter Ahmed Timol.

The case is being heard by Judge Billy Mothle, and is expected to run until the August 11 in three separate sittings.

But why is this case so important?

The circumstances surrounding the death of Timol have long been speculated to have been questionable, after it was ruled by apartheid era Magistrate JJ de Villiers that Timol had died as a result of suicide.

His family disputed these claims, with a belief so strong that they hired a private investigator to look into the matter.

What exactly were the circumstances surrounding Timol's death?

On the evening of October 22 1971 Timol, who was 30 years old at the time, was stopped at a police roadblock in Coronationville while he was with friend and medical student Saleem Essop.

Both Timol and Essop were arrested and taken to the Newlands Police Station where they were separated and later taken to what was known as John Vorster Square Police Station, now the Johannesburg Central Police Station. Timol was held for four days and 19 hours, until it was alleged he jumped to his death from the 10th floor of the building.

Essop had survived, after being tortured to an inch of his life.

What did the apartheid-era magistrate rule?

That the cause of “probable cause of death” was as a result of serious brain damage and loss of blood sustained when he jumped out of a window of “Room 1026” and “fell to the ground of on the southern side of the building. He committed suicide”. The magistrate also ruled that “no living person” was responsible for Timol's death.

What is the Timol family disputing?

On May 30, Imtiaz Ahmed Cajee, Timol's nephew, said that their immediate priority was to have the “apartheid era inquest finding of nobody to blame reversed.” The family believed that Timol was tortured to death and then thrown from the building or pushed to his death.

For Cajee, the reality that he and his family have been living with still haunts them.

This morning's proceedings saw the opening comments from advocate Howard Varney, who is representing the Timol family, followed by Dr TP Pretorius on behalf of the state.

The first witness who was called to the stand was investigating officer Captain Bel Nel. Nel revealed that three of the 23 officers allegedly involved in the death of Timol were still alive.

In attendance was human rights lawyer George Bizos, who was most prominent during the Rivonia trial and fought for the rights of many anti-apartheid activists.

When Essop was called to the stand to testify, he was given the space to give his entire background, from his educational background to his involvement in politics, as he recounted his five-year sentence to Robben Island and subsequent release.

Before court adjourned for lunch, Essop had barely begun to touch base about his relationship with Timol, saying that Timol was someone who “would be proud of the free South Africa we have today.”

“If you ask me about Ahmed as a political person, he was not afraid,” Essop said.

More than anything, the family sought to restore dignity to the name of Timol, who played an instrumental role in fighting the injustices of the apartheid-led government.

“This is an important step in setting historical records straight. The truth of what had happened to Timol following his arrest must be uncovered. The correct representation of facts will restore the dignity of this very brave anti-apartheid activist in the public record,” Cajee said.

The first of three sittings will continue until June 30.

Ahmed Timol inquest reopens

SOUTH AFRICA

Monday 26 June 2017 - 7:54am

<https://www.enca.com/south-africa/ahmed-timol-inquest-reopens>

JOHANNESBURG - The inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed

Timol reopened on Monday, 45 years after his death.

Members of his family carried out a private investigation, after which they presented strong evidence to the NPA last year.

They argue that apartheid-era magistrate JJ de Villiers erred in his findings when he found that Timol, a teacher and South African Communist Party member, had not been tortured during his detention.

Timol was arrested in Johannesburg in 1971 and allegedly jumped to his death from a narrow tenth floor window at what was then John Vorster Square Police Station, since renamed to Johannesburg Central Police Station, five days after being detained.

He was the first political detainee known to have died at John Vorster Square at the hands of the Security Police.

No-one was ever prosecuted for his death.

A documentary on his life and the circumstances of his death, "Indians Can't Fly", directed by Enver Samuel, was released in 2015.

Judge Billy Mothle will head up the new inquest.

eNCA

Inquest reopens into death of apartheid activist Ahmed Timol

26 June 2017 - 11:04BY ERNEST MABUZA

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2017-06-26-inquest-reopens-into-death-of-apartheid-activist-ahmed-timol/>

Judge Billy Mothle on Monday reopened the inquest into the death of activist Ahmed Timol, who died in police custody at the Johannesburg Central Police Station in 1971.

Mothle said the court would welcome any information that would assist the proceedings.

Timol died on October 27 1971 while in police custody. An inquest was held in 1972 and the magistrate court in Johannesburg found that he had committed suicide.

However, the Timol family approached the National Prosecuting Authority with information that was not available to the magistrate in 1972.

Mothle said the National Director of Public Prosecutions and the Timol family intended to present additional evidence.

"We as South Africans are about to enter a door that will rekindle painful memories. That door will be closed once the truth has been revealed," Mothle said.

Advocate Howard Varney, for the Timol family, told the high court in Johannesburg that the family was seeking a different finding to that made in 1972.

"According to the police, Timol committed suicide in room 1026. This was enthusiastically accepted by the magistrate. The Timol family has called for the reopening of the inquest to remedy the injustice," Varney said.

He said the magistrate court ignored key forensic evidence that exonerated police from wrongdoing.

"We will demonstrate that the police manufactured a version to cover the truth. We will argue that the magistrate disgraced the judicial profession and the legal profession."

Barney said a witness, Salim Essop, had agreed to testify on what happened on the day.

- TimesLIVE

Essop Pahad hopes Timol Inquest Uncovers Truth about his Death

Gia Nicolaides | 5 days ago

<http://ewn.co.za/2017/06/26/essop-pahad-hopes-timol-s-inquest-uncovers-truth-about-his-death>

The first sitting of the inquest is set to begin in the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday after the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) reopened the case.

JOHANNESBURG - Former Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad says he hopes that the inquest into anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol uncovers the truth behind his death.

The first sitting of the inquest is set to begin in the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday after the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) reopened the case.

Timol died in police detention 45 years ago after falling from a window on the 10th floor at the notorious John Vorster Square Police Station, which is now known as the Johannesburg Central Station.

Timol's death was ruled a suicide in 1972, however, a private investigation launched by his family uncovered new evidence which it then handed over to the NPA.

Pahad says Timol was one of his best friends.

"Hopefully, the inquest will come to a correct conclusion and demonstrate that the judiciary, certainly those magistrates court and inquests were nothing but spokespersons for the

apartheid regime. We should remember that that magistrate found that Timol was not tortured.”

(Edited by Zamangwane Shange)

Timol's nephew says Start of Inquest was 'Emotionally Draining'

Gia Nicolaides | 5 days ago

<http://ewn.co.za/2017/06/26/timol-s-nephew-says-start-of-inquest-was-emotionally-draining>

He died in police detention 45 years ago after falling from a window on the tenth floor at the notorious John Vorster Square Police Station now known as the Johannesburg Central Police Station.

JOHANNESBURG – The nephew of the late anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol says day one of the inquest into his uncle's death has been emotionally draining.

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) reopened the case into Timol's death.

He died in police detention 45 years ago after falling from a window on the tenth floor at the notorious John Vorster Square Police Station now known as the Johannesburg Central Police Station.

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

Timol's nephew Imtiaz Cajee, who was in court on Monday, says: “You know it was a tough day. I have been working on this issue for so many years to preserve my uncle’s honour, legacy and dignity. It sunk into my system when the judge started proceedings this morning. My thoughts went back to my maternal great-grandparents attending the Johannesburg inquest in 1972.”