

Media Articles: Re-Opening of Ahmed Timol Inquest - 30th June 2017

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Timol testimony: 'The Indian is dead'

2017-06-30 21:03 Jeanette Chabalala, News24

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/timol-testimony-the-indian-is-dead-20170630>

Johannesburg - "The Indian is dead."

This is what Dr Dilshad Jhetam, a former detainee, was told when she asked a wardress at the John Vorster Square building where Ahmed Timol had been transferred.

Jhetam was testifying on the fifth day of the first sitting of the Timol inquest in the South Gauteng High Court in Johannesburg on Friday.

Jhetam said while she was detained, she was rushed to hospital after she had woken up one day swimming in her own vomit, and had self-inflicting scratches.

When she returned back from hospital, she was interrogated by a man named Pitout.

"He [Pitout] told me that Ahmed was no longer with us but quickly retracted his statement," she said.

"The next morning, I asked the wardress where Ahmed had been transferred to and she told me that 'the Indian' was dead."

Jhetam said she was previously interrogated by several officers who had accused her of being a communist. She recognised Timol's screams emanating from another room.

Jhetam said she knew Timol's voice and assumed he was being tortured much worse.

She said she heard Timol scream nearby every night.

Jhetam said she would often hear the screams in the early hours of the morning.

"Ahmed's screams grew louder and became more desperate as the night wore on. He was begging for them to stop, even crying at one point. He was shouting but I could not make out what he was saying."

She said, later on, the screams stopped. She explained to the court that on the 10th floor, where she was kept, "officers were scurrying around madly" and "everything had suddenly changed".

'I was shocked'

Jhetam told the court that she knew Timol from Roodepoort where they both lived. They lived in the same street, two blocks apart, she said.

She said Timol was her history teacher; however, when she left Grade 10, they lost touch for a couple of years until they met again when she was at university.

She told the court that at the time of her arrest, she was living her dream as a medical student. But things took a turn when two men came looking for her at home.

"I was shocked. They said they wanted to take me away and question me about my activities," Jhetam told the court.

She said she was taken to Colonel Greyling who said Timol and Salim Essop were arrested for being communists and they named her as the third person who would join them in replacing the apartheid government.

Electrocuted

Jhetam said during interrogations, she was made to stand in the corner and relieve herself while still clothed. At some point, the officers brought water in a jug and she was asked to drink it.

"I was standing [in] the puddle of my own urine."

She also added that during interrogations, she was "smacked" by one officer, and later they took turns in smacking her.

The officers had allegedly electrocuted her repeatedly when she continued to deny accusations made about things Timol and Essop did.

Jhetam added that the officers would attach the device to her back and proceed to electrocute her with a higher wattage.

"It was excruciating... I still ask myself how I survived the electrocution. It was horrible."

She had been interrogated by 16 to 20 officers in about four days, she said.

On Monday, the court heard that, of about 23 security police that were allegedly involved in the matter, only three were still alive.

Surviving policemen

Judge Billy Mothle gave an order on Friday morning for the police commissioner to assist the court.

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.

Mothle has ordered that all the surviving policemen who were involved in the arrest and detention of struggle veterans Essop and Timol, be subpoenaed to testify in court.

Mothle on Thursday said the National Prosecuting Authority must issue subpoenas urgently to the policemen so that they can assist with information as to what really led to Timol's death.

Mothle wants the police officers to appear in the next sitting of the inquest, expected to take place between July 24 and August 4.

The inquest is expected to resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11.

'I heard Ahmed Timol's screams. And then they stopped' – Jhetam

Avantika Seeth2017-06-30 15:39

<http://city-press.news24.com/News/i-heard-ahmed-timols-screams-and-then-they-stopped-jhetam-20170630>

Day five of the first sitting into the reopening of the inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol saw Dr Dilshad Jhetam take to the witness stand.

Jhetam is an accomplished physician and cardiologist. She was the first Muslim physician in the then Transvaal, and the first female cardiologist in the country, yet back in 1971 under the strict law of apartheid, she was arrested and held in detention at John Vorster Square. It was there that she underwent humiliating acts of torture and abuse.

At the time of her arrest and subsequent detention, Jhetam was a medical student who had an unwavering commitment to fulfil her dream of becoming a medical doctor.

Jhetam was accused by the security police of being involved in underground political activities alongside Timol and Saleem Essop. She vehemently denied this.

Jhetam lived in the same Roodepoort area as Essop and Timol, and merely interacted with them on a social basis.

While she was being detained, she experienced torture and abuse at the hands of the interrogating officers.

“I needed to relieve myself and I asked to go the bathroom and they wouldn't let me. I still feel the pain and the humiliation. Here I was, a decently brought up young lady and this happened to me. It was humiliating. They thought this was a huge joke. They mocked at me and laughed at me. They used my humiliation against me as a ploy.

“They brought water in a jug and a glass tumbler. I was standing in a puddle of my own urine. Somewhere along the line they brought a bucket because they said I was messing the floor too much. I was then standing in a bucket of my own urine,” she said.

Afterwards she was subjected to electrocution as a method of torture.

Still, she refused to give in to the constant threats by the interrogation officers. They called her “parmantig”, the Afrikaans word for “cheeky”.

Throughout her ordeal, Jhetan was accused of having political ties with Timol and Essop, and the officers referred to them as her “boyfriends”.

A few days later she heard screams. She was 99% sure it was Timol’s voice. He was being held in the office next to hers.

“Then one day his screams suddenly stopped, and I thought, you poor devil.”

Jhetan’s testimony could play a pivotal role in determining when Timol’s cries were silenced, in order to ascertain the approximate time of his death. Apartheid magistrate JL de Villiers ruled that his death was a suicide.

Jhetan was being held on the 10th floor during her interrogation, the same floor on which she heard his screams and from where he was alleged to have jumped to his death.

As the final witness into the first sitting of the reopening of the case this week, Jhetan said that after 45 years, she decided to come forward with her personal accounts, because she felt strongly that “there should never be extra-judicial killings in any country whatsoever, all in the name in trying to keep certain people in power”.

“Ahmed Timol is not here. He has paid with his life. I honestly hope and pray that this country of ours never reverts to such barbarous means or methods to suppress [the] opposition, in any form whatsoever, now or in the future,” were Jhetan’s final comments.

The inquest will resume on July 24 at the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria, where three subpoenaed officers who are alleged to have been involved in Timol’s arrest and detention are expected to testify.