

# Teacher who died in detention to get award from Zuma

Nephew wants to research Security Branch archives to find out the facts about his uncle's death

**LONG DROP:** Ahmed Timol was a schoolteacher in Roodepoort who opposed apartheid. He was arrested at a police roadblock on October 22, 1971 and died five days later. He was the 22nd political detainee to die in detention since 1960.



PICTURE: WWW.AHMEDTIMOL.CO.ZA

**SHAUN SMILLIE**  
shaun.smillie@inf.co.za

**O**N OCTOBER 22, 1971, a young activist named Ahmed Timol was arrested at a police roadblock. Five days later he was dead. The security police claimed he committed suicide by jumping from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square police station (now Johannesburg Central). But Timol's family didn't

believe them. Now, 41 years after his death, Timol's nephew, Imtiaz Cajee, has launched a website.

He said: "Firstly it's there to keep his legacy alive. Secondly, the hope is that it will find new sources of information."

A year-and-a-half before his arrest, Timol, 29, a schoolteacher, had returned to SA from England to set up underground structures for the banned SA Communist Party.

An inquest claimed Timol committed suicide.

It didn't explain certain marks that his mother noticed when she examined his corpse. An eye had apparently been gouged out and fingernails were missing.

At the time, he was the 22nd political detainee to die in custody since 1960. For a long time now, Cajee has been looking for information about what happened to Timol during the five

days he was in custody.

"I am convinced that state institutions do have information relating to his death," he said yesterday.

Among questions Cajee wants answered are:

● Was the roadblock set up to entrap Timol?

● Were there informers involved in his arrest?

● And if he was killed, who pushed him from a window at the police station?

"I have gone through this process as an obedient nephew, and I am looking for closure."

Cajee believes there are classified records of the former Security Branch.

"Retrieving records from the apartheid archives is a long and tedious process. Bureaucrats who have no understanding of our Struggle history are responsible for making decisions to declassify these records. If this information is

not declassified, I intend to escalate the matter to the information regulator," Cajee said in a statement.

Cajee has written a book on his uncle, *Timol - Quest for Justice*. It was published in 2005.

On Saturday, Timol will be posthumously awarded the Sabotage Campaign Gold Medal by President Jacob Zuma.

See [www.ahmedtimol.co.za](http://www.ahmedtimol.co.za)