

# Death of a detainee

## FASTERS ASKING WHY

TO MY knowledge about 60 students, academics, clerics, Black Sash members and other members of the public are into the second week of their 30-day Ramadan fast.

At least another 40 have fasted, or are fasting for a shorter period, in identification with the Ramadan fasters.

Members of the public, friends and relatives have been asked why I think recent events must now make the answers crystal clear. The tragic suicide of Ahmed Timol, detained last Sunday, the mysterious illness of Mohammed Essop, a student of Wits University, and all the others. . . .

Triggered off by the Rev Bernard Wrangmore's courageous marathon fast, we in Johannesburg, supported by hundreds of other fasters throughout the land, are asking why.

Why do so many die so eerily in our prisons? Why does our Government seem so unready to judicially and impartially investigate the alleged torture!

Why, in fact, were 50-odd people so intimidatingly raided last Sunday? On what grounds were almost a score of them held under the Draconian security laws of this State.

In a democratic country, an elected government would see fit to answer some of these questions.

What can  
one  
believe?

THE death of Ahmed

The Star

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LETTERS  
TO THE  
EDITOR

When questioned, Mr Pelsler, Minister of Justice, answers that he does not know anything of the circumstances of Timol's suicide, but that he will be getting a report.

A democratic government supposedly has control and jurisdiction over its police and security police. But apparently not so in South Africa. Here, we are forced to infer, BOSS rules, and Mr Pelsler patiently, meekly awaits its reports.

If indeed this is the way our police are allowed to operate, then every South African has the right to conclude that perhaps descriptions of our system of government as being a police state are correct.

### BRINK OF DEATH

That is what we fear. That is the question we want answered by our Government. That is why the Rev Bernie Wrangmore fasted to the brink of death. That is why hundreds of South Africans are fasting in protest.

If there is no answer forthcoming to our questions, our worst fears will have been confirmed.

Leonard Suransky  
Johannesburg.

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## What can one believe?

**THE** death of Ahmed Timol leaves one aghast and sick at heart.

One does not know what to believe because events take place secretly, behind closed doors. It makes one wonder whether some of our leaders have lost their sense of humanity through the wielding of too much power for too long, and through government by fear.

Have they forgotten their Bible? Moses was deprived of entry to the promised land because he gave way to anger and broke the tables of the law. King David was publicly denounced by the prophet because he evilly abused his powers.

B. Chatterton  
Johannesburg.

## NOT THE WORD OF JESUS

**WITHOUT** commenting on the merit of what the Reverend Wrankmore and others intend to accomplish by their fasting, I want to point out that public fasting in order to pressure people into action or in order to influence public opinion is not the fasting commanded by Jesus.

Jesus said: "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance . . . But . . . anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast." (Matthew 6: 16-18).

Public fasting may be an effective political weapon, but it has nothing to do with the religion Jesus has told us to practice.

Paul K. Williams  
Evangelist, Johannesburg  
Church of Christ.

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## 17 days of Ramadan

**DURING** the past eight years, at least 14 people have died under mysterious circumstances while being detained by the Security Police.

I am distressed by the occurrence of such events.

I ask all those who share my sympathies to join me in a 17-day fast lasting from sunrise to sunset. It will begin tomorrow and last until November 19 to coincide with the last 17 days of the fast of Ramadan

Graham Flax  
Yeoville.

## To a grieving mother

**AS** an ordinary housewife I want to extend my deepest sympathy to the family of Ahmed Timol, and especially to his mother, whose grief-stricken face on the front page of The Star on Thursday must have touched the hearts of even the most indifferent amongst us.

To those who care I say — let us not wait for another tragedy, but let us be heard in every media available so that in some small measure we may compensate for the years of silence, and the times we have ignored the gnawing demands of conscience when we have closed our eyes to injustice and tyranny.

Elizabeth Lavery.  
Bergvlei.