

# Media Articles: Re-Opening of Ahmed Timol Inquest - 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017

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## Contents

Salim Essop takes centre stage during inquest into Ahmed Timol's death.....	2
Ahmed Timol inquest to inspect scene of his death .....	6
Salim Essop takes centre stage during first day of Ahmed Timol inquest.....	7
'They will answer to God' - Ahmed Timol's brother.....	11
AS IT HAPPENED: Inspection of scene of Ahmed Timol's death.....	14
Ahmed Timol inquest taken back to 1971 during inspection in loco.....	15
The Ahmed Timol inquest .....	19
'#Ahmed Timol inquest will cause us to confront sordid history' .....	21
#AhmedTimol inquest: Ahmed loved life and would have no given in to abuse.....	23
Reopened inquest into Timol's death 'painful' .....	24
Ahmed Timol's death comes under the spotlight.....	26
Timol inquest visits John Vorster Square.....	27
The significance of the Ahmed Timol inquest .....	27
Timol plunged 10 storeys to his death at the notorious John Vorster Police Station decades ago.....	28
John Vorster Square revisited as Timol inquest reopened .....	30

## Salim Essop takes centre stage during inquest into Ahmed Timol's death

[Amanda Khoza](#) 27 June 2017 10:37

<https://mg.co.za/article/2017-06-27-salim-essop-takes-centre-stage-during-inquest-into-ahmed-timols-death>

Opening the inquest, the judge who has been appointed to oversee the inquest, Billy Mothle, said the purpose of the inquest was to determine the circumstances surrounding Timol's death. (Facebook.com)

The man who was arrested alongside late anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol in 1971, took centre stage at the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday during the first sitting of the inquest into his death.

Salim Essop recounted painful memories of the torture he endured in the hands of the apartheid security police after he and his friend were held in custody.

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 National Prosecuting Authority, asking for the inquest to be reopened. The NPA agreed to reopen the inquest.

Essop told the court that he was born in Johannesburg in 1949 and two years later his family moved to Roodepoort, where they met Timol's family.

While at school his teacher praised him for being one of the brightest in his class and it came as no surprise that his parents wanted him to study medicine, even though he had dreams of studying law.

“I applied at all the universities and got accepted but I chose Wits because it was close to home and I could travel by train and it would be easier for my parents.”

### **Arrest**

Essop said when he got to university he took notice of the apartheid system and he hated it.

“I saw South Africa as my country, my home. I did not want to live in a segregated society.”

He said through seeing racism and reading up about the country’s history, he slowly learnt that there was something wrong in the country and he was determined to fight against the apartheid system.

His studies at Wits were interrupted in his third year when he was arrested along with Timol.

Speaking about that fateful October Friday night, he said he and Timol were driving from Coronationville to Fordsburg, with Timol as a passenger, when they were stopped by two policemen who flickered a torch signalling them to pull over.

“The police drove us to Newlands police station. We were both asked to sit on the bench, we were handcuffed together.”

He said Timol was taken to the back of the police station while he remained at the front.

“Very quickly two police came, I was un-handcuffed and taken to the left hand side, a small building.”

### **Interrogation, torture**

He said he was then taken to a room, which he thought was an office, where he was repeatedly interrogated.

“They asked us where we were going and who we were going to see and after answering I was punched in the stomach.

“I am given this terrible punch I am knocked down...I was standing on my feet when they gave me the punch.”

He said the police took off his glasses and gave him a hard severe slap.

At some point, Essop remembers seeing tufts of his hair on the floor.

“I was seeing stars, these were hard slaps,” he said.

Essop told the court that he was seriously assaulted and went through systematic torture.

In an unmarked vehicle he was then taken to what was then known as John Vorster Square.

### **Timol’s death**

He was taken into a vault where he endured several forms of torture and one day after being detained he saw a man he recognised as being Timol being dragged somewhere.

“The man’s height was the same as Ahmed’s. I think he was wearing the same clothes but it’s hard to recollect,” he told the court.

He said that would be the last time that he saw Timol.

Essop said he was not told about Timol’s death until the day he was scheduled to appear in court on March 8.

“I was devastated,” he said of when he learnt of Timol’s death.

He told the court about the various forms of abuse he endured including mule kicks, electrocution and suffocation by plastic.

“They strapped me up on a chair, then started applying shocks to my thighs... There was electricity going through body,” he said.

To this day, Essop believes that the apartheid police were trying to break his spirit.

At times he would wake up wet and he realised later that the police had urinated on him.

One day the police took him to the staircase and they dangled him in the air, he told the court.

“I was in such pain, even if they wanted to drop me, kill me, it was fine. I really thought they were going to drop me.”

He said at some point the police tortured him so much that he landed up in hospital.

### **Inquest**

Opening the inquest, the judge who has been appointed to oversee the inquest, Billy Mothle, said the purpose of the inquest was to determine the circumstances surrounding Timol’s death.

He said the court welcomed any information that would assist the proceedings.

In essence, Mothle said, the regional court magistrate at the time found and concluded that Timol had committed suicide and that the police were not responsible for his death.

He officially opened the inquest allowing for the Timol family to present new evidence, which it found proved that Timol was murdered instead of committing suicide.

At the end of the inquest, Mothle will present his findings, based on the evidence presented during the proceedings.

“Considering the conspectus of the documents thus far, there is no doubt that South Africans are about to enter a door that rekindle painful memories. A door that invites us to embark on a journey which will cause all of us to confront the sordid part of our country. That door will only close, once the truth is revealed,” he said.

### **Disgrace**

Counsel for the family, advocate Howard Varney, submitted that it was found that Timol had jumped out of room 1026 at the John Vorster Square building.

He said the inquest reopened 45 years after the first inquest into Timol’s death in the hands of the security branch custody.

He said the family held the view that the police fabricated their version to mask Timol’s brutal torture. Varney said magistrate De Villiers at the time ignored key forensic findings in exonerating the police from wrongdoing.

“Our instructions are to demonstrate to this court that the police did indeed manufacture a version to cover up the truth of what happened to Ahmed Timol... We will argue that magistrate De Villiers, in averting his gaze from the truth, acted disgracefully. He disgraced the legal profession and he disgraced the judicial office.”

Varney said it was unfair for the Timol family to wait 45 years for this day to come.

“Why did the Timol family have to move heaven and earth to get to get this inquest off the ground?”

The inquest is expected to be heard from June 26 and June 30, and then resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11. - News24

### **Ahmed Timol inquest to inspect scene of his death**

Nation Nyoka, News24 2017-06-27 05:07

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/ahmed-timol-inquest-to-inspect-scene-of-his-death-20170627>

Johannesburg – The inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol is set to enter its second day at the High Court in Johannesburg on Tuesday, with the court going on an in loco inspection of the scene of Timol’s death at 14:00.

The Roodepoort man supposedly jumped from the 10th floor of the Johannesburg Central Police Station, previously known as John Vorster Square, a fact that the teacher’s family refused to accept. He died in 1972 while being interrogated in police custody and his death was ruled a suicide.

At the time, security police and a magistrate’s findings following an inquiry in the year of his death said that Timol was treated kindly by the police officers, that he was never assaulted or tortured, and that he had taken his own life.

The inquest into the death of the teacher was reopened by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) after the Timol family prompted them following the discovery of new evidence.

On Monday, the investigating officer – Ben Nel - took the stand, confirming that he had been approached by the family to investigate the case. Timol was the 22nd person to die in police custody, 45 years ago.

Family lawyer Howard Varney told the Johannesburg High Court on Monday that he planned on proving how the justice system had let Timol and his family down, as well as exposing the

web of lies concocted by the police, and those in the legal fraternity, to endorse police brutality during apartheid.

Varney said that it was a pity that some of the police witnesses had passed on already, and therefore could not answer questions that are bound to come up with the reopening of the case.

Timol left South Africa in December 1966 to perform hajj in Saudi Arabia, before moving to London where his exiled friends, Mohammed Salim Essop – who testified on Monday - and Aziz Pahad, were. He returned to South Africa in 1970.

Human right's lawyer George Bizos – who was also present on Monday - is expected to give his testimony on Wednesday.

The inquest is expected to take place again at the end of June, recommencing again between July 24 and August 4, and concluding with the final sessions on August 10 and 11.

Judge Billy Mothle will oversee the inquest.

### **Salim Essop takes centre stage during first day of Ahmed Timol inquest**

Amanda Khoza, News24 2017-06-27 08:35

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/salim-essop-takes-centre-stage-during-first-day-of-ahmed-timol-inquest-20170627>

Johannesburg – The man who was arrested alongside late anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol in 1971, took centre stage at the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday during the first sitting of the inquest into his death.

Salim Essop recounted painful memories of the torture he endured in the hands of the apartheid security police after he and his friend were held in custody.

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 National Prosecuting Authority, asking for the inquest to be reopened. The NPA agreed to reopen the inquest.

Essop told the court that he was born in Johannesburg in 1949 and two years later his family moved to Roodepoort, where they met Timol's family.

While at school his teacher praised him for being one of the brightest in his class and it came as no surprise that his parents wanted him to study medicine, even though he had dreams of studying law.

"I applied at all the universities and got accepted but I chose Wits because it was close to home and I could travel by train and it would be easier for my parents."

### **Arrest**

Essop said when he got to university he took notice of the apartheid system and he hated it.

"I saw South Africa as my country, my home. I did not want to live in a segregated society."

He said through seeing racism and reading up about the country's history, he slowly learnt that there was something wrong in the country and he was determined to fight against the apartheid system.

His studies at Wits were interrupted in his third year when he was arrested along with Timol.

Speaking about that fateful October Friday night, he said he and Timol were driving from Coronationville to Fordsburg, with Timol as a passenger, when they were stopped by two policemen who flickered a torch signalling them to pull over.

"The police drove us to Newlands police station. We were both asked to sit on the bench, we were handcuffed together."

He said Timol was taken to the back of the police station while he remained at the front.

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“I was devastated,” he said of when he learnt of Timol's death.

He told the court about the various forms of abuse he endured including mule kicks, electrocution and suffocation by plastic.

"They strapped me up on a chair, then started applying shocks to my thighs...There was electricity going through body," he said.

To this day, Essop believes that the apartheid police were trying to break his spirit.

At times he would wake up wet and he realised later that the police had urinated on him.

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### **Disgrace**

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He said the inquest reopened 45 years after the first inquest into Timol's death in the hands of the security branch custody.

He said the family held the view that the police fabricated their version to mask Timol's brutal torture. Varney said magistrate De Villiers at the time ignored key forensic findings in exonerating the police from wrongdoing.

“Our instructions are to demonstrate to this court that the police did indeed manufacture a version to cover up the truth of what happened to Ahmed Timol... We will argue that magistrate De Villiers, in averting his gaze from the truth, acted disgracefully. He disgraced the legal profession and he disgraced the judicial office.”

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“Why did the Timol family have to move heaven and earth to get to get this inquest off the ground?”

The inquest is expected to be heard from June 26 and June 30, and then resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11.

### **'They will answer to God' - Ahmed Timol's brother**

Amanda Khoza, News24 2017-06-27 09:23

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/they-will-answer-to-god-ahmed-timols-brother-20170627>

Johannesburg – Anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol's younger brother Mohammed on Monday said he believed that the surviving security police, who detained his brother in 1971, now had a second chance to tell the truth about his mysterious death.

"We will not know who was responsible for his interrogation and his death, until the security police from the old government are prepared to redeem themselves because sooner or later they are going to die, if they are still alive.

"If they believe in God, they will answer to God. This is what my mother said during the TRC. She said, 'I want to know what happened to my child? I want to know who was

responsible for killing him and if I cannot get it in this world, those that are responsible will have to answer to God'."

Speaking outside the High Court in Johannesburg during the first sitting of the inquiry looking into Timol's death, Mohammed, who is younger by seven years, said the reopening of the inquiry meant a great deal, even if it was 45 years after his death.

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. The NPA agreed.

The Roodepoort teacher's loved ones have always maintained that they 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.

Mohammed said: "For many years now, Ahmed's memory has lived on, but the official records have text that Ahmed decided to commit suicide during interrogation while in detention in 1971, October 27."

Mohammed said the initial inquest into his brother's death took place between April and June in an all-white court.

### **'It was actually a farce'**

"The magistrate was white. The prosecutor was white. The security policemen were white. The system was white. We knew that we stood no chance to get the truth.

"The findings of the magistrate after many days of inquest hearings, which my parents and I attended every day, we could see through the farce, it was actually a farce, the inquest."

He said the initial inquiry found that the security police were painted as good policemen that never tortured political detainees.

"Ahmed was not the 21st person to be killed in custody as a political detainee, he was the 22nd one. So all the policemen who were testifying about how they treated Ahmed [are not telling the truth], we knew very well that Salim Essop, who was giving testimony today

[Monday] was almost killed and landed in hospital a few days after he and Ahmed were detained."

He said once South Africa was liberated and received its democracy through negotiations, it relied on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to get the truth.

"The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was an opportunity for everyone to either give a testimony or a written testimony..."

He said in building the rainbow nation, many things fell through the cracks.

"Many families still need to know the truth about what happened to their loved ones. Families need to know what happened to some of their children that went to exile and never returned. There were some activists that disappeared and never returned."

Mohammed said the TRC gave some families closure, but others had not been heard.

### **'We don't accept security police's versions'**

Timol's nephew, Imtiaz Ahmed Cajee, in the last 20-odd years insisted that the family get to the bottom of what really happened to Ahmed.

"We do not accept the security police's versions and the findings of that inquiry in 1972 and when the magistrate said Ahmed was treated kindly by the policemen, he was never assaulted, he was not tortured and Ahmed took his own life..."

"We cannot accept that."

He said the opening of the inquiry was a new beginning for the family.

"If we get closure in this particular inquest [it would be great] but maybe we may never get to the bottom of the truth because the only people that were there were security policemen, unless there is someone alive and they want to redeem themselves and tell the truth, then we will know the truth," he said.

The first sitting of the inquest kicked off with Judge Billy Mothle, who has been appointed to oversee the proceedings, officially opening the inquest.

### **In loco inspection**

Proceedings in the packed court moved along swiftly, with the investigating officer Ben Nel, who was appointed by the family, taking the stand.

He told the court of how he went about collating all the evidence pertaining to the case, from reading newspaper archives to tracing down some of the police officers who worked on the case, some of whom have since died, as well as speaking to some of the witnesses.

The man who was arrested with Timol during a roadblock in 1971, Salim Essop, testified, giving a detailed account of how he was tortured while he was in detention after the arrests.

On Tuesday, Essop is expected to continue with his testimony and at 14:00 the court is expected to proceed to conduct an inspection in loco at what was known as John Vorster Square, where the incident took place.

Human rights lawyer George Bizos is expected to give his testimony on Wednesday.

The matter continues during the week and then it will resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11.

### **AS IT HAPPENED: Inspection of scene of Ahmed Timol's death**

2017-06-27 14:30 - Follow News24 reporter Amanda Khoza for the latest updates: @MandaKhoza

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/live-ahmed-timol-death-inquest-20170627>

Following Salim Essop's testimony at the inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, the court is now conducting an in loco inspection of the scene where Timol plunged to his death.

### **'They will answer to God' - Ahmed Timol's brother**

Anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol's younger brother Mohammed on Monday said he believed that the surviving security police, who detained his brother in 1971, now had a second chance to tell the truth about his mysterious death.

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Speaking outside the High Court in Johannesburg during the first sitting of the inquiry looking into Timol's death, Mohammed, who is younger by seven years, said the reopening of the inquiry meant a great deal, even if it was 45 years after his death.

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### **Ahmed Timol inquest taken back to 1971 during inspection in loco**

Amanda Khoza, News24 2017-06-27 22:21

<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/ahmed-timol-inquest-taken-back-to-1971-during-inspection-in-loco-20170627>

Johannesburg – Struggle icon Salim Essop on Tuesday took the court back to 1971 when he relived his experience of being detained at John Voster Square on Commissioner Street.

The building, now the Johannesburg Central Police Station, is the same building where his friend, anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, fell ten storeys to his death.

On the second day of the inquiry looking into Timol's death, the High Court in Johannesburg conducted an inspection in loco at the police station, where detainees were allegedly tortured and allegedly mysteriously died in custody in the hands of the apartheid police.

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 National Prosecuting Authority, asking for the inquest to be reopened. The NPA agreed to reopen the inquest.

Proceedings began at the High Court in Johannesburg on Monday.

When the media arrived at the police station, the family's attorney Howard Varney showed the media the spot where it was believed Timol's body landed after allegedly committing suicide.

The media entered the building and it was Essop, who testified on Monday, that dominated the visit, showing and leading the delegation through the corridors and some of the important rooms where the torture allegedly took place.

He re-enacted a scene from his testimony where he recalled seeing two policemen holding a man he believed was Timol.

With two legal officials holding onto Essop, he proceeded to show Judge Billy Mothle that the man he saw appeared to not have enough strength to walk on his own.

The delegation was also led to room 1026 where it is said Timol took his life.

Closed window

Essop read out the police statement and told Mothle he believed it would have been impossible for Timol to commit suicide because he was in the presence of another officer.

“According to the police, at 3:48pm, Captain Cloyd and Van Niekerk, who also interrogated me [Essop], left the room. Roderick and Timol remained behind.

“Timol asked to go to the toilet and stood up with Roderick at the same time, Roderick moved to the left...Timol rushed to the window...”

Essop said there were questions surrounding how Timol got to the window.

“Because of the latch this window swings a certain amount, if you open it, it swings not even 90 degrees... it is also alleged that the window was closed when Timol rushed, from what we can gather, he rushed passed Roderick.”

Mothle had to caution Essop often not to speculate on what happened.

Essop said, “Apparently he opened the window, the distance from the ground to the window is about a metre, above the trousers, they say that he dived out. I could not see how he dived out with the window closed, he has got to open the window first.”

He also showed the court the vault where he testified that he was tortured by the police.

“This room, because of its present content, it looks smaller but if you remove all the content, it would be larger...”

A tour was also taken to the toilet where he went to look at his face after allegedly being brutally beaten by the police.

“This is where I also washed,” he said pointing at the basin.

There were times where Essop did not recognise some of the newly developed areas in the building.

Over 50 interrogators

He pointed out that he was never brought to the area near room 1026.

The delegation ended the inspection at the roof of the building.

During cross examination in court earlier, Essop held his own.

He stood by what he said on Monday, reiterating that he, without a doubt, still believes that Timol was killed by the apartheid security police.

Essop told the court that he was tortured by the police for about four days.

"There were teams. I counted more than 50 interrogators who came in at different times. I was never alone."

He said he would be able to identify some of the policemen who assaulted him.

Mothle said it was important the process be conducted similar to an identity parade.

Varney asked Essop if he had the physical capacity to commit suicide.

Essop said, "I see myself as a survivor, if anyone tried to kill me, I would try prevent that."

He said he was a mentally fit person, however, after all the brutal torture that he had gone through, he accepted that his death would be caused by the police.

Emotional trauma

Essop also thought that, like him, Timol did not have the desire to take his own life.

“He loved life, like me.”

Essop told the court that he suffered emotional trauma because of the severe torture, to the extent that he received counselling.

He said he recovered from the psychological trauma because he had the will to love.

When he started Tuesday’s proceedings Mothle said he had been made aware that there was a member of the public who was in court on Monday, who claimed that his brother was also killed at John Vorster Square in 1976.

The man allegedly came because he too did not believe that his brother committed suicide but was killed by the security police.

Mothle said the man’s claims needed to be investigated as they could play a crucial role in the inquest.

Once Essop had concluded his testimony Mothle thanked him for testifying, saying he knew that it must have been difficult for him to relive the past.

"Your evidence in this inquest is very important and I believe it will help us... I am sorry for what you have gone through," he said.

Human rights lawyer George Bizos is expected to take the stand on Wednesday.

The hearings continue this week and then resume between July 24 and August 4, and August 10 and 11.

### **The Ahmed Timol inquest**

The Star | 27 June 2017, 10:03am Khaya Koko

<http://www.iol.co.za/the-star/the-ahmed-timol-inquest-9990908>

“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 yet tragic death of his older brother, Ahmed Timol, at the hands of apartheid security police in 1971.

Mohammed was speaking to The Star on the sidelines of the reopened inquest into his brother's death, which began yesterday at the high court in Joburg.

The inquest, brought by Timol's family, aims on 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, currently known as Johannesburg Central police station.

The presiding officer in the reopened inquest, Judge J Mothe, said in court yesterday he had no doubt that this process would rekindle painful memories and open a door “which will cause all of us to confront the sordid part of our history”.

This is the “sordid history” that Mohammed said his mother, especially, lived with - saying security police harassed his parents for the five days after his brother's arrest leading up to his death.

Both Timol's parents have since died.

“They (security police) were at our flat daily, looking for things, intimidating my parents and so on,” Mohammed explained.

“The day before they came to inform my mother that Ahmed was dead, she asked one of the security policemen in Afrikaans, ‘Please, I want to see my son’. And the security policeman said, ‘You will not see your son. You did not give him a hiding when he was small - we are now giving him a hiding.’ That was the humiliation for my mother.”

Two witnesses were called to give testimony in court yesterday, where gruesome details emerged from Dr Salim Essop about how he said 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 he said were meted out against him, including being tied with a plastic bag around his head to a point where he said he felt like he was suffocating, being kicked repeatedly in a method known as “mule kickers”, and being subjected to electric shocks 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 have been fine,” Essop said while choking up with emotion.

Speaking to The Star after his testimony, Essop asserted that while it was not nice to relive “the nightmarish experience” of his torture, he felt good about publicly relaying it as he hoped it would help other people.

“Maybe it's a way to come to terms with realities that we lived under during the apartheid era. In a way we want closure; just as in the way the Timol family want closure about Ahmed’s death, I want closure about all the horrendous experiences I had in the hands of the security police,” he emphasised.

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; and Sergeant JP Fourie, who worked at the state mortuary and received Timol's mortal remains.

The inquest was to continue today with an on-site inspection of the old John Vorster Square.

### **'#Ahmed Timol inquest will cause us to confront sordid history'**

Khaya Koko Politics | 27 June 2017, 11:11am

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/justice-safety/ahmed-timol-inquest-will-cause-us-to-confront-sordid-history-9988930>

Johannesburg - "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 yet tragic death of his older brother, Ahmed Timol, at the hands of apartheid security police in 1971.

Mohammed was speaking to The Star on the sidelines of the reopened inquest into his brother's death, which began on Monday at the high court in Joburg.

The inquest, brought by Timol's family, aims on 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, currently known as Johannesburg Central police station.

The presiding officer in the reopened inquest, Judge J Mothe, said in court on Monday he had no doubt that this process would rekindle painful memories and open a door "which will cause all of us to confront the sordid part of our history".

This is the "sordid history" that Mohammed said his mother, especially, lived with - saying security police harassed his parents for the five days after his brother's arrest leading up to his death.

Both Timol's parents have since died.

“They (security police) were at our flat daily, looking for things, intimidating my parents and so on,” Mohammed explained.

“The day before they came to inform my mother that Ahmed was dead, she asked one of the security policemen in Afrikaans, ‘Please, I want to see my son’. And the security policeman said, ‘You will not see your son. You did not give him a hiding when he was small - we are now giving him a hiding.’ That was the humiliation for my mother.”

Two witnesses were called to give testimony in court on Monday, where gruesome details emerged from Dr Salim Essop about how he said 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 he said were meted out against him, including being tied with a plastic bag around his head to a point where he said he felt like he was suffocating, being kicked repeatedly in a method known as “mule kickers”, and being subjected to electric shocks 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 have been fine,” Essop said while choking up with emotion.

Speaking to The Star after his testimony, Essop asserted that while it was not nice to relive “the nightmarish experience” of his torture, he felt good about publicly relaying it as he hoped it would help other people.

“Maybe it's a way to come to terms with realities that we lived under during the apartheid era. In a way we want closure; just as in the way the Timol family want closure about Ahmed's

death, I want closure about all the horrendous experiences I had in the hands of the security police,” he emphasised.

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; and Sergeant JP Fourie, who worked at the state mortuary and received Timol's mortal remains.

The inquest was to continue on Tuesday with an on-site inspection of the old John Vorster Square.

@khayakoko88

## **#AhmedTimol inquest: Ahmed loved life and would have no given in to abuse**

### **Pretoria News**

KHAYA KOKO News | 27 June 2017, 11:32am

<http://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/ahmedtimol-inquest-ahmed-loved-life-and-would-have-no-given-in-to-abuse-9991959>

"He (Ahmed Timol) loved life...both of us did."

This was the assertion made by Dr Salim Essop when asked by Judge J Mothe whether he ever thought about committing suicide during what Essop referred to as torture he and Timol endured at the hands of apartheid police.

Essop was testifying at the High Court in Joburg on Tuesday morning at the reopened inquest into the mysterious death of Timol.

In its second day, the inquest was brought by Timol's family to overturn a June 1972 ruling by Magistrate JL De Villiers, who ruled that Timol had taken his life by jumping from the

10th floor of the infamous John Vorster Square police station; currently known as the Johannesburg police station.

Essop was in his second day of testimony when emphasised that neither he nor his friend Timol would have given in to the abuse he said was meted out against them by security police during their interrogation.

"We had the anticipation that we could be arrested...once you get into the sort of political work we did, we knew what (the consequences were)," Essop explained.

"We loved life, we enjoyed life...that is why we were such good friends."

Dr Essop gave grim details on the injuries he said he suffered during what he called the roughly four days of "non-stop torture".

Referring to a "torture tactic" known as the "mule kick", where he said he was repeatedly kicked by police even when on the floor, Essop said he bled from his nose and mouth, had marks all over his body, his hair was violently pulled from his scalp and his body was stiff "like rocks" from the mule kicks.

He said he was taken to the old HF Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria, currently known as Steve Biko Academic Hospital, after his interrogation, where he heard a nurse remark upon his arrival: "This guy is not going to make it."

Essop was arrested with Timol in October 1971 after a car they were travelling in was stopped by police and banned SACP and ANC literature were found in it.

Timol died in October 1971.

@khayakoko88

### **Reopened inquest into Timol's death 'painful'**

Khaya Koko News | 27 June 2017, 11:04pm

<http://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/reopened-inquest-into-timols-death-painful-10000443>

Making another emotional return to the place where his uncle Ahmed Timol died, Imtiaz Cajee is adamant about one thing: "My uncle is not a victim."

Cajee was speaking to the Cape Times' sister paper, The Star, yesterday on the 10th floor of the Johannesburg Central Police Station - a once-infamous building formerly known as John Vorster Square, where Timol fell 10 storeys to his death in October 1971 after being detained.

Cajee was at the station for an on-site visit led by Judge J Mothle in connection with the reopened inquest into his uncle's death. It was ruled a suicide by magistrate JL de Villiers in June 1972.

Cajee contended that Timol and his friend, Dr Salim Essop, played a small but important role in trying to revive the anti-apartheid struggle by distributing what was then banned SACP and ANC literature, after the regime had "largely suppressed" resistance following the 1960s Sharpeville massacre and Rivonia Trial.

The pair were caught with the banned literature in the car they were travelling in.

"They were freedom fighters. The apartheid regime had thought they had crushed all forms of opposition following Sharpeville. And here comes a cell distributing political literature. So, if the security branch thought they had crushed all forms of opposition, they were mistaken because it (Timol's death) only inspired a new generation of freedom fighters."

Essop was also at the on-site visit, where he took the inquest's presiding officer, Judge Mothle, to room 1013, where he said he was tortured for roughly four days following his arrest, and room 1026 - the room where Timol supposedly jumped to death.

Essop also demonstrated to the judge what he said were Timol's movements the last time he saw his friend alive, saying he saw him dragging his feet past room 1013 with a hood over his head and two police officers holding Timol on either side.

Essop said he was in the room 1013 vault when he got a short sight of his comrade looking severely injured and in pain. He was giving testimony at the high court in Johannesburg this week.

Cajee said it was painful to hear this testimony, much like it was painful to return to a building where he said his uncle suffered untold brutality.

“Every time one comes here, it doesn’t get any easier - it becomes more difficult and painful,” Cajee said.

“But my thoughts and prayers don’t just go out to Dr Essop and my uncle, but every single political detainee who was tortured here.”

@khayakoko88

## **Ahmed Timol's death comes under the spotlight**

SOUTH AFRICA

Tuesday 27 October 2015 - 8:04pm

<https://www.enca.com/south-africa/timols-death-comes-under-spotlight>

JOHANNESBURG - It’s been exactly 44 years since teacher and anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol died in police custody - a death that authorities then insisted was a suicide.

Now the inquest papers into his death are to be made public.

Timol’s family said medical evidence showed that he was the victim of prolonged torture and beating.

They want the inquest into his death reopened, and its verdict overturned to one of murder.

The 29-year-old teacher was arrested on 22 October 1971, and died five days later.

The family said they never believed police claims that he had killed himself, and neither did the anti-apartheid activists who'd fought alongside him.

"The findings of the inquest magistrate was that he was a communist, he took his own life, the security police did not lay a finger on him and my mother, who gave testimony at the

inquest that the security police came and told her: you will not see your son again...and the magistrate said she was an untruthful witness," said the activists brother, Mohamed Timol.

Timol's family now wants that verdict overturned.

Advocate George Bizos, who represented them at the original inquest, said there was ample evidence to show that the police's account of how Timol died was not true.

"Science, and particularly medical science, has shown them to be bloody liars."

An independent pathologist found that Timol's bruising proved he had been repeatedly beaten in the days before his death – a finding that was ignored by the magistrate hearing his inquest.

## **Timol inquest visits John Vorster Square**

SOUTH AFRICA

Tuesday 27 June 2017 - 1:55pm

<https://www.enca.com/south-africa/catch-it-live-timol-inquest-visits-john-vorster-square>

JOHANNESBURG - The South Gauteng High Court visits the Johannesburg Central Police Station on Tuesday afternoon to replay the last hours of apartheid activist Ahmed Timol's life.

He fell from the 10th storey of the police station, then known as John Vorster Square, in 1971 in what police claimed was a suicide.

## **The significance of the Ahmed Timol inquest**

Yadhana Jadoo **national** 27.6.2017 05:20 am

27 | Page

TIMOL TRUTH MUST PREVAIL  
(www.ahmedtimol.co.za)

<http://citizen.co.za/news/1552691/significant-ahmed-timol-inquest/>

Timol plunged 10 storeys to his death at the notorious John Vorster Police Station decades ago.

The 45-year wait for the reopening of an inquest into anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol's death under police detention on October 27, 1971 significantly coincided yesterday with the 62nd anniversary of the Freedom Charter and the celebration of Eid.

According to Timol's nephew, Imtiaz Cajee, while the coincidence was emotional it also attached meaning to the importance of the inquest.

"It's been a very difficult day, having just ended the month of Ramadan and celebrating Eid," Cajee said.

"We also marked the birth of the Freedom Charter."

With this considerable observation, he added that the reopening of the inquest was also in a democratic dispensation, with a judge who was supportive and understood the plight not only of his family but of other families affected by apartheid-era deaths.

Timol, a South African Communist Party member, Umkhonto weSizwe operative and Roodepoort teacher, died after plunging 10 storeys to his death at the notorious John Vorster Police Station.

He became the 22nd political detainee to die under detention since 1960 and his family has never believed the 30-year-old committed suicide by jumping from what is now known as Johannesburg Central Police Station.

The inquest saw Timol's friend Saleem Essop, who was also an activist at the time, give testimony on what occurred after they were both arrested at a roadblock.

Essop barely managed to survive the brutal torture and was never to see Timol get out alive.

“Two officers come in ... they lead me out of his office, then they take me along the passageway ... we then ascend the stairwell ... this kind of spiral thing, there is a door on the 10th floor now, we go through the door, and on the right, not far from the entrance and the stairwell, is this office,” Essop said.

During his time on the stairwell, he was then told: “Do you know how many floors there are down there? Do you know how many floors you can see? You could die from here, down there. You could go right down.”

Essop was then taken into an office.

“And, I am not taken into this office for any kind of questions. There’s no friendly chat there.”

There was a range of torture methods, he said.

“One of the things they did to me was take a plastic bag, put it over my head ... tightly and then suffocate me.

“It went on for quite a while and made me hyperventilate and feel like I could suffocate.

Another method included what police called a “mule-kick”, conducted by different people executing the method.

Essop had to simulate sitting on a chair, while people from either side “delivered massive kicks, as the heels of a mule would do”.

They also delivered punches to his trunk, and this became so severe that his legs began stiffening.

Cajee said with the testimony being so emotionally draining, his heart went out to Essop for what he endured during the “dark days of apartheid”.

“The upcoming weeks will be very difficult. We will take it day by day.”

Veteran struggle lawyer advocate George Bizos, who represented the Timol family at the initial inquest that held no one accountable, is also expected to give emotional testimony later this week.

It also emerged that certain police may still be alive and will be called to the inquest, added Cajee.

“We want to show my uncle didn’t commit suicide and police must be held accountable.”

“And we owe it to him to honour his legacy.”

The importance of this case, like many others, was to understand the past in order to build the future, Cajee said.

“If we understand the sacrifice others made, it should inspire us to build the country. Today we lack role models in this political climate.”

It was through sacrifices made by some like Neil Aggett, who also mysteriously died under police detention, and Timol, that made it possible for South Africans to live in a democratic country, he added.

## **John Vorster Square revisited as Timol inquest reopened**

27 June 2017 - 16:57 BY ERNEST MABUZA

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-06-27-john-vorster-square-revisited-as-timol-inquest-reopened/>

The reopened inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol on Tuesday afternoon visited the scene of his death in October 1971 - John Vorster Square police station.

The police station, now known as Johannesburg Central, was the scene where Timol fell to his death from the 10th floor of the building.

An inquest which was held in 1972 found that Timol had committed suicide.

However, Timol's family asked for the inquest to be reopened because new information had come to light.

Salim Essop, the man who was arrested with Timol on October 22, 1971, testified at the inquest on Monday and Tuesday.

He could not testify at the original inquest in 1972 because he was in custody following his arrest with Timol at a roadblock in Johannesburg.

Essop was charged with furthering the aims of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party and of endangering the maintenance of law and order. He was sentenced to a five-year prison term and released in 1977.

Essop on Tuesday led an inspection of the police station where he pointed out the rooms where he said he had been tortured.

Following his arrest at a roadblock with Timol, they were taken to the Newlands Police Station, where they were separated.

Essop was then sent to the Johannesburg Central Police Station, where he told the inquest he was tortured non-stop for about four days. He was then hospitalised before being sent to prison to await trial.

During his testimony, Essop said he saw a man at the Johannesburg Central Police Station whose head was covered in a hood on the 10th floor of the building around October 25 1971. He said he was sure it was Timol.

During the visit to the police station, Essop pointed out the two rooms where he was tortured.

He first showed inquest Judge Billy Mothle the room on the 9th floor where he was initially interrogated.

He described the initial assault on the 9th floor.

"One policeman went wild. He just kicked me and pushed me around."

Essop then took the judge across the passageway leading to the stairs to the 9th floor.

He then took the judge to Room 1013 where he described how he was assaulted and tortured for about four days.

He also told the judge how he saw a person who looked like Timol being assisted across the passageway from the washroom to Room 1026, where Timol was being interrogated. Essop testified that this must have been on October 25.

Essop said he could see the person from his room which was open at the time.

That is the last time Essop saw Timol.

"There was a kind of hood on Ahmed's head," Essop said as he demonstrated how Timol was being assisted to an interrogation room.

Timol died on October 27.

The inquest then moved to Room 1026 to look at the reconstructed room where Timol was interrogated.

Mothle thanked the people who attended the inspection.

The inquest continues in the high court in Johannesburg on Wednesday, when veteran human rights lawyer George Bizos SC is expected to testify.