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Mohapi Family Turns to Lawyers for Assistance

45th Anniversary of Mapetla Mohapi

PRESS RELEASE:

On Thursday, 5 August 2021, South Africa commemorates the 45th anniversary of the death in detention of South African Student's Organisation (SASO) and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) leader, Mapetla Mohapi.

After a month of the start of the June 1976 Soweto uprising, Mohapi was detained without charge on 16 July 1976 when security police swooped on Black Consciousness activists. Twenty days after his arrest, Mapetla died in police custody at the Kei Road Police Station in King Williams Town, on 5 August 1976. He was the 25th detainee to die in police detention between 1963 – 1990.

In an inquest that was held in 1977, Magistrate A. J. Swart found that Mapetla Mohapi died from an application of force to the neck and that nobody was to be blamed. In effect, though not in form, the verdict was of suicide.

Nonhle Mohapi, wife of Mapetla, was one of the first witnesses who testified at the opening of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in East London on the 15th April 1996. Nonhle, an antiapartheid activist who was detained and banned in 1978 pleaded with the Commissioners, "I want

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to repeat, my hope is that the TRC will reveal, will try to find out what happened to their father, so that when my children are elderly people, they will know exactly what happened to their father”.

Mapetla’s daughters, Motheba who was two years old and Konehali seven months old when their father was taken away from them and killed in police detention. They add, “We closely followed the re-opened Ahmed Timol Inquest in 2017 and Dr Neil Aggett in 2020 and 2021. We remember witnessing our mother’s heart wrenching testimony at the TRC in 1996 and are sorry to state that the government of the day has done nothing to investigate our father’s callous murder”.

The Mohapi family is now exploring legal assistance in their plight for justice for their father. “The Mohapi family like so many other families throughout the country are desperate to set the record straight as to what happened to their loved ones during the apartheid-era. It is unacceptable for historical records to continue reflecting in a democratic South Africa that Mapetla Mohapi committed suicide and nobody was responsible for his death. The family needs closure and it is for this reason that we working with the family to rectify this gross injustice”, adds Kuban Chetty, of Kuban Chetty Attorneys, the firm currently being consulted by the family.

Motheba and Konehali belong to the Apartheid-Era Victims Family Group and support the application brought by the Cradock Four compelling the NPA to re-open the murder of the Cradock Four.

For further enquiries, contact Kuban Chetty

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