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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

SUBMISSIONS - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

DATE: 30 APRIL 1996 NAME: HAWA TIMOL

CASE: GO/O173 JOHANNESBURG

DAY 2

HAWA TIMOL: (sworn states)

DR BORAINÉ: Thank you. Please be seated. Now you have somebody else with you and perhaps you can tell us who that is?

MS TIMOL: That's my younger brother Haroon.

DR BORAINÉ: Now Mrs Timol the name Ahmed Timol is very, very well known, not only in Gauteng but throughout South Africa. Many of us sitting on the panel remember him and what happened to him and to your family as though it was yesterday. You have come to tell us your story about what happened, and in order to do that Dr Fazel Randera will now take over from me to guide you in that story. We are very grateful that you have come. Thank you.

DR RANDERA: (No translation of the question by Dr Randera)

MS TIMOL: I am okay. They came to me at about three o'clock in the morning.

DR RANDERA: I will ask you the story shortly for you to tell me the story shortly.police raided at least 115 homes and offices across the country ostensibly in search of goods and documents relating to banned organisations, offences under the security laws. At least seven people, mainly Indians were detained. Among these was Ahmed Timol a 30 year-old schoolteacher and his brother Mohammed.

On the 28th of October 1971 it was announced that Ahmed JOHANNESBURG HEARING TRC/GAUTENG

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Timol had died the previous day after a fall from the 10th floor window of John Vorster Square. Brigadier P Kruger and Sergeant Rodrigues both stated that Timol had committed suicide by jumping out of the window.

I also want to read a little about the investigation and the inquest. After numerous calls for a full judicial inquiry and inquest into the death of Ahmed Timol began in late April 1972. On the 22nd of June 1972 magistrate Mr J J L De Villiers found that Timol had committed suicide and that there was no one to blame for his death. The magistrate deduced that as Timol was a self-confessed communist, and I quote,

"That he had been familiar with instructions given by the party to its members, these instructions included to commit suicide rather than betray the Communist Party".

Furthermore the magistrate believed that Timol had committed suicide because he blamed himself for the information he had revealed to the security police and because he feared long imprisonment. The magistrate summed up the motives for Ahmed Timol's suicide by stating,

"At this stage of his life the opportunity was there and he used it".

Auntie Hawa do you remember that I came to your home the other night?

MS TIMOL: Yes I do.

DR RANDERA: Auntie Hawa can you hear me. Please do not be scared and please take your time before you answer. Do you remember that I came to your home the other night and that you had issued a statement to Wessels?

MS TIMOL: Yes I understand.

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DR RANDERA: This is your time to give Ahmed's story.

MS TIMOL: They came first through to see the son and the son was not there. They said that it was the wrong number. They asked the neighbours where was Timol and they were told no.2 and they came to us. They knocked at the door and my late husband asked who is it and they said it was the police and my late husband opened the door. They came in. They asked for my late son and we said he wasn't in. They went to his room and they saw he was not there. They asked us where he was and they then ransacked all of Ahmed's possessions. They went on to the balcony and found nothing.

I then argued with them that I wanted to see my son and they said that your son is with us. I asked them that I wanted to see him and they said no you cannot see him. They then sat and they interrogated my late husband and then the Azan(?) that is the call for prayer went and my late husband asked to be allowed to pray. They refused him to do so. It was the fasting month and my late husband informed them that he had not missed a prayer for many years and that he be allowed to pray. He said that he would pray in their presence on the balcony, and that he should be allowed to pray. They told him that he would jump off the balcony and he then prayed and the police then left.

There were three policemen and shortly thereafter they came back to look for Haroon and the third time when they came back they took my son Haroon and at quarter past one on Saturday they came back and they again interrogated us. They wanted to know with whom my son fraternised and who were his friends and where were they. They continuously interrogated us and they ransacked the home and found nothing. They then came back at night and again

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interrogated us. This happened on Saturday.

On Sunday nobody came. On Monday morning the driver, our driver came and they interrogated the driver asking him whether he had a permit. The driver then indicated to me that he was arrested and I had sent him home in the event of the police coming back. In the afternoon on the same day they came back and again ransacked the place. I told them that I wanted to see my son.

On Tuesday they came back and I again told them that I wanted to see my son and they told me that you will not see your son again. I then told the policeman that he should go home and ask his wife what it means to a mother to rear a child and not to see him. I told him - he asked me numerous questions and left.

On Wednesday at about 12 they came back again. They did not come inside the house but they waited outside. They went on top of the roof. They interrogated a cleaner. They asked him who cleans the storeroom. They asked for the keys of the storeroom. The landlord had gone to mosque to pray. They called his wife. The wife opened the storeroom and they asked who cleaned the storeroom and the wife had indicated that it had been cleaned about two weeks ago. They had interrogated the landlord's wife and they were abusive towards her. She asked to pray but they did not allow her to pray.

After the mid-afternoon prayer the landlord came and he was interrogated as well. They then left and they took the maid and interrogated the maids. When the maids came back we asked what happened and we were told that they had interrogated them with regards to Ahmed and said that if they don't get the correct answers they would assault them.

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After the early evening prayers they came back again. I asked who they were, they identified themselves as security police. They stood and I asked them to have a seat. One of the police pushed me violently onto the seat. I stood up and I asked what happened, and they told me that my son had jumped from the tenth floor of John Vorster Square and that he had died and that he was ... (intervention)

DR RANDERA: Please take it easy, control yourself, get calm. Please take your time.

MS TIMOL: I told them that I do not believe that my son had committed suicide and I showed them the window of my room and I told them it is impossible for him to have jumped and that they did not look after him and they told me that he had jumped and had di-----

death that is where he was teaching, but perhaps you could just give us a little more testimony as to who your brother was and what his involvement was that led to his arrest and subsequent death.

MR H TIMOL: Thank you very much Commissioners. I am actually very pleased that you have asked this question.

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Living now in a democratic South Africa it affords us an opportunity to actually relate contributions of individuals, one is able to relate the contributions of individuals to bring about a democratic dispensation in South Africa.

To start off I would like to say that Ahmed grew up in a very religious orthodox family of the Islamic faith. He grew up at a time when there was intense oppression in South Africa, and as a young Indian Moslem he too became affected by what was happening in this country, the injustices committed against the vast majority of the people of South Africa, those who were not White.

In his early years he became influenced by the political situation and he became a young activist of the Indian Congress. He completed his schooling and went for training to become a schoolteacher. ...(tape ends) South Africa on exit permit to live in exile. It seemed that this really affected him tremendously.

In 1966 at the young age of 24 he left South Africa and went to Mecca to perform Hadj which is compulsory for every adult Moslem. After completing his Hadj he thereafter went to England and he lived with his very close friends Essop Pahad and Aziz Pahad. Aziz Pahad is presently the deputy foreign minister of this country. And Essop Pahad is a member of Parliament.

The three years that he spent in England he taught as a schoolteacher in London and through his contact of meeting other people in London I think he finally reached a decision that he had to return to South Africa to participate in the underground struggle.

It was during this period he also came into contact with a prominent South African Indian by the name of Dr

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Yusuf Dadoo, I am sure all of us do know him or have heard of him. I think it was Ahmed's commitment to bring about a just society that he felt that he had to return to South Africa during a very dark period when the security police and the securocr-----

CHAIRPERSON: Mrs Timol and your sons we are all very deeply touched with the story that we have heard of the suffering of your family which is repeated in the sufferings of other families.

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We thank you very much for coming to share with us and helping us as a nation to cry over things that happened in our nation. We hope that you too will, as your son said, have a pride in the fact that though he died so painfully it was not in vain. I am sure that your son and others will be aware that often and often in the rallies that were held in different parts of our country often you had as it were a roll of honour and our young people got to know names and perhaps know the story a little bit. It is a great privilege for all of us to be hearing from yourselves.

We do hope that we can perhaps take your recommendations about memorialising your brother, your son and all of course we can do is recommend as well to appropriate people that this would be a fitting memorial to a stalwart.

Thank you very much.
