

Remembering a fallen comrade and struggle hero

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The Order of Luthuli is awarded to South Africans who have made a meaningful contribution to the struggle for democracy, human rights, nation-building, justice and peace, and conflict resolution.

The Order of Luthuli, Silver, was awarded to Ahmed Timol (posthumous) by President Zuma for his excellent contribution and selfless sacrifice during the struggle against apartheid.

National Orders are bestowed by the country's President who recognize the contributions made by individuals/groups and continue to add value to South Africa. And, one was them was Ahmed.

The 'Ahmed Timol Educational Trust' was launched at the Krugersdorp Civic Hall "in an effort to leave a legacy behind of this struggle hero, and to ensure that this trust fund allocate funds to deserving students to pursue their studies further," said Ismail Vadi one of the many dignitaries (Judge Bizo, Firoze Cachalia, Essop and Aziz Pahad and many others were present). Who was this fallen Comrade?

He was born on 3 November 1941 in Breyten, Mpumalanga, and was one of six children born to Hajee Yusuf and Hawa Timol. In 1949, the Timol family moved to Roodepoort where Ahmed attended primary school and completed his secondary schooling at Johannesburg Indian High in 1959.

He began his career working as a clerk in a bookkeeping firm in Johannesburg - this was to augment the family's income so his siblings could go to school. But, he continued his studies through an award of a scholarship, and graduated from the Transvaal Indian College (Fordsburg). Upon graduating Ahmed starting teaching at Roodepoort Indian High School, where he spent two years.

Apart from being a dedicated educator, Ahmed was a sportsman of note, especially in cricket - he earned his colours for the South African Indian Cricket and South African Non-Racial Teams. Many believe if given the opportunity to compete, if it was not for the apartheid policies, he would have obtained national colours. He was also a soccer administrator for Dynamos Football Club, a role he undertook as a cover to carry out his underground political work.

In December 1965, at age of 25, he completed his Hajj and went to London where he stayed with political friends, brothers Essop and Aziz Pahad. And, he began teaching at an immigration school in Slough.

A nomination by the Communist Party in London saw him and another nominee, former South African President Thabo Mbeki; undergo political training in Moscow for nine months in 1969. The following year Ahmed returned to his country and set up underground structures for the banned South African Communist Party (SACP).

In 22 October 1971, he was detained at a police roadblock. Five days later Ahmed was dead! He was the 22nd person to die in police custody since 1963. Police claimed he had jumped from the tenth floor of the John Vorster Square Police Station (today called Johannesburg Central Police Station) during interrogation.

Despite gruesome and horrific numerous bruises on Ahmed's body, a presiding magistrate at the inquest of his death cleared the security police of any wrongdoing (Sic)!

On 30 April 1996, Ahmed's ailing mother (now deceased), Hawa, giving emotional testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing where she appealed to the commission to find her son's killers and requested that a school be named for him.

On 29 March 1999, former President Nelson Mandela granted Hawa her wish and renamed Azaadville Secondary School the Ahmed Timol Secondary School, at the same time paying a glowing and moving tribute to a fallen hero and comrade!