THE WITNESS

Aggett's family want his torturers charged

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Maryna Lamprecht

THIRTY-ONE years after Dr Neil Aggett became the first white detainee to die in police custody, his family and friends are demanding that cases of culpable homicide and murder be investigated.

On the anniversary of the trade unionist's death last week, the Neil Aggett support group sent an open letter to Justice Minister Jeff Radebe, saying that there are enough legal grounds to charge former security policemen Lieutenant Steven Whitehead and Major Arthur Cronwright for Aggett's torture and death.

Aggett (28) was found hanged in his cell in John Vorster Square police station in February 1982.

He had endured 70 days in detention and 62 hours of torture.

Police said he had committed suicide, but family members are convinced that there are legal grounds to charge the policemen after Judge Chris Nicholson said at the launch of Aggett's biography last October that his death was undoubtedly an "induced suicide".

For this reason, there are grounds for a case of culpable homicide.

Dr Liz Floyd, who was Aggett's partner for eight years before his death, told sister paper Beeld yesterday that it grieves her that Whitehead and Cronwright never appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to explain their roles.

The TRC found that Aggett's torture was the "direct cause" of his suicide, although no one was ever prosecuted.

"Neil's death opened the eyes of white people," Floyd said.

"It was a watershed moment for white South Africans because they had to accept that people were tortured in security police detention."

Radebe's spokesperson Mthunzi Mhaga could not say whether he had received the open letter, because he was in the cabinet lekgotla all week.

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'Bekyk Aggett se dood as moord'

2013-02-10 23:36

Maryna Lamprecht

Artikelopsies Deel Kry Beeld op

31 jaar nadat dr. Neil Aggett die eerste wit politieke gevangene geword het wat in polisie-aanhouding dood is, eis sy vriende en familie dat 'n saak van strafbare manslag en moord ondersoek word.

Op die herdenking van Aggett, 'n bekende vakbondaktivis, se dood verlede week het die Neil Aggett-ondersteuningsgroep 'n ope brief aan Jeff Radebe, minister van justisie, gerig waarin hulle beweer daar is genoeg regsgronde om lt. Steven Whitehead en maj. Arthur Cronwright van die destydse veiligheidspolisie te vervolg weens Aggett se marteling en dood.

Ná 70 dae in polisie-aanhouding en 62 uur van marteling is Aggett (28) in Februarie 1982 in 'n sel in John Vorsterplein, Johannesburg, opgehang gevind.

Dr. Liz Floyd (58), vriendin van dr. Neil Aggett, gister by haar huis in Kensington. Foto: NELIUS RADEMAN

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Volgens die polisie het hy selfmoord gepleeg, maar familielede is opnuut oortuig daarvan dat daar sterk regsgronde vir vervolging is nadat regter Chris Nicholson in Oktober verlede jaar met die bekendstelling van Aggett se biografie, *Death of an Idealist*, gesê het sy dood was ongetwyfeld "veroorsaakte selfmoord" en om dié rede is daar gronde vir 'n saak van strafbare manslag.

Dr. Liz Floyd (58), wat tot voor sy dood in 'n agt jaar lange verhouding met Aggett was, het gister by haar huis in Kensington, Johannesburg, aan *Beeld* gesê dit grief haar dat Whitehead en Cronwright nooit voor die Waarheid-en-versoeningskommissie (WVK) verskyn het of aansoek gedoen het om amnestie nie. Sy en Aggett is saam deur die veiligheidspolisie opgelaai en sy is eers ná sy dood vrygelaat. Floyd was nog in aanhouding tydens Aggett se begrafnis, gelei deur aartsbiskop Desmond Tutu en bygewoon deur sowat 15 000 mense.

"Neil se dood het veral wit mense se oë oopgemaak. Sy dood was 'n waterskeidingsoomblik vir wit Suid-Afrikaners omdat hulle toe moes aanvaar dat mense in aanhouding deur die veiligheidspolisie gemartel word."

Volgens Floyd was dit ook vir swart Suid-Afrikaners betekenisvol dat 'n wit mens bereid was om in aanhouding te sterf vir die stryd teen apartheid.

"Met Neil se dood het wit mense vrae begin vra. Hulle wou weet waarom mense aangehou en gemartel is en dit het tot 'n ondersoek gelei wat bevind het die veiligheidspolisie is buite beheer."

Floyd is deesdae 'n direkteur in die Gautengse gesondheidsdepartement.

Die WVK het destyds bevind Aggett se selfmoord was "die direkte oorsaak" van sy beweerde marteling, tog is niemand ooit vervolg nie.

Mthunzi Mhaga, woordvoerder van die minister van justisie, kon nie sê of Radebe die brief ontvang het nie aangesien hy heelweek in die kabinetsberaad was.

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