

Forensic Investigative Inquiry Reveals Cover Up of Aborigine Custodial Death in Australia

Australian Aboriginal Douglas Scott died in 1985 after being unlawfully detained for 60 days in the Darwin prison for using 'obscene and indecent language'. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was asked to investigate the death of Douglas Scott. At the beginning of its inquiry, the Royal Commission publicly declared that "...individual officers were not at risk for having acted improperly or criminally in the particular range of issues that were coming before the commission..." It concluded that Douglas' death was suicide.

Contrary to the Royal Commission's verdict, a plethora of evidence and eyewitness testimonies collected by Douglas wife, Letty Scott, suggest that Douglas Scott was unlawfully detained, tortured and refused bail, legal representation and medical assistance. He was finally murdered in the early hours of the 5th of June 1985.

Corroborating Letty Scott's evidence, this year, a Forensic Investigative Committee comprising of the worlds most prominent experts published a Reconstruction Report into the Death of Douglas Scott. The report questions both the integrity of the Australian authorities' conduct into the case and the conclusions of the Royal Commission.

In particular, the Forensic Commission's report states that, "The reported and visible external and internal inquiries, along with observations regarding the scene in which the death occurred, raise serious concerns about the security of the death scene and the possibility of the cause of death other than suicide." It continues, "upon the evidence presented to us including the evidence of persons who where in a position to see and hear certain things, it appears that, quite contrary to the evidence and the conclusions of the Royal Commission, there was an involvement on the part of four prison officers ... which has never been the subject of inquiry...". The Forensic Investigative Committee recommends the re-opening of the case.

So far, Letty Scott's request to re-open the case has been rejected on 'policy' grounds. The Sikh Human Rights Group supports Mrs. Scott's campaign to increase international support and bring the people responsible for hundreds of custodial Aboriginal deaths to justice.

Racism and systematic discrimination against Aborigines in Australia remains unabated. In the meantime, the number of custodial deaths of Aborigines increases while the perpetrators remain unpunished since the Royal Commission asserts that all such incidents are 'suicides'. **The Australian Sunday Morning Herald and the Vanguard as well as the New York Times International have been supporting Letty Scott's request for justice. It is Europe's duty to encourage and strengthen this antiracist campaign.**

Elina Stamou, **Sikh Human Rights Group**
Tel. 020 8 840 3222, 020 8 579 8898.
Fax. 020 8 579 7439

The Sikh Human Rights Group works towards
the protection of human rights of individuals,
minorities and displaced people around the world.