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Transforming victims into active citizens



Khulumani Calls for the Truth about the Murder of Ashley Kriel 30 Years after His Death, 9 July 2017: In Search for Healing through Truth Recovery



The Amnesty Committee's decision to grant amnesty to Jeffrey Benzien, Ashley Kriel's killer, is publicly challenged by his friends. (Gallo Images/Oryx Media Archive)

More than one year after the announcement by the Hawks in March 2016 of the re-opening of the investigation into the killing of Ashley Kriel by apartheid security agents in his safe house in Hazendal, Athlone in Cape Town on 9 July 1987, on the basis of new evidence strongly suggesting that Kriel was murdered, came to light. Forensic scientist Dr David Klatzow has explained that Kriel was shot from behind, "from a distance", while his wrists were handcuffed behind his back. The fact that Captain Jeffrey Benzien who was involved in the death of Kriel, was found to have committed perjury at the inquest into Kriel's death, strengthened the suspicions of Kriel's family that he was murdered.

At his appearance before the TRC's Amnesty Committee, Benzien told the committee that Ashley Kriel had shot himself in a scuffle while resisting arrest. But Ashley's sisters have never believed Benzien's testimony, which was given without any hint of remorse. They believe that Benzien did not come clean at the TRC. Ashley's sisters have remained committed over these past

three decades to uncovering the truth about their brother's 'murder'. They have explained that Ashley was handcuffed when he was shot in the back. They had seen blood on the tarmac in the yard leading into the house where he had died, as well as blood spatters on the wall of the kitchen of the house. They also saw a bloodstained spade that they believe was used to beat their brother and that probably caused the gash on his head, which they saw when they viewed his body at the mortuary. Kriel's family believe they were failed twice: once by the police inquiry into his murder, and the second time by the TRC.

In his first speech after his release from prison on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela paid tribute to all those who made the ultimate sacrifice and specifically mentioned the young activists, Solomon Mahlangu, who was hanged at 22 years of age and Ashley Kriel who was killed at 20 years of age. Mandela said, "*I salute the rank-and-file members of the ANC. You have sacrificed life and limb in the pursuit of the noble cause of our struggle ... I salute combatants of Umkhonto weSizwe, like Solomon Mahlangu and Ashley Kriel, who have paid the ultimate price for the freedom of all South Africans.*"

Those who knew Ashley speak of his extraordinary charisma, his leadership capacities as well as his love of life and his sense of humour. He was a powerful mobiliser and organizer of people in his township of Bonteheuvel and he joined Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), to fight the apartheid regime. He was trained at an ANC camp in Lusaka and on his return to Cape Town, spent most of his time in hiding in areas close to their childhood home.



Ashley Kriel, born 17 October 1966, died 9 July 1987



Ashley's sister, Michel, laying a wreath on his grave, on the 30th anniversary of his killing, 9 July 2017

Former MK commander Fumanekile Booi spoke about the Ashley he had known at the memorial ceremony to mark 30 years since his death. He said, "*I knew Ashley personally, a very dedicated and intelligent young man who thought like an adult. He was a remarkable learner who rejected the opportunity of going to England and took a decision to join the armed struggle. He gave up his life to set an example to the youth and sacrificed his life for the freedom of the people of South Africa when he was a young man. He will forever be remembered for his heroic deed.*"

It is time for the truth to be uncovered for Ashley's family and all other families who have been denied the relief of the truth. Khulumani supports the ongoing struggle for the truth including disclosure of whether Ashley was betrayed by having the whereabouts of his safe house disclosed.