

## NPA reopens inquests into apartheid-era deaths

The NPA has agreed to reopen inquests into the apartheid-era deaths in detention of Dr Neil Aggett and Dr Hoosen Haffeejee, in the face of threats of legal action from their families, says a [Mail & Guardian](#) report. NDPP Shamila Batohi has written to the KZN and Gauteng Judge Presidents, asking them to appoint judges to hear the two inquests, a week after she announced that the Haffeejee inquest had been shelved. The [M&G](#) says Batohi's about-turn came after lawyers for the Aggett family placed her on terms for her failure to follow up on the announcement by former Justice Minister Michael Masutha in April that he had authorised an application by the NPA for the inquest into Aggett's death in detention in February 1982. **Lawyers for the Haffeejee family also served Batohi with notice that they would go to court for relief should she not allow a new inquest into his death to go ahead.** Aggett, a trade unionist and activist, was detained in 1981 and was found dead under mysterious circumstances at the John Vorster Square Security Branch headquarters on 2 February 1982. Haffeejee, a dentist, died in detention at the Brighton Beach police cells on 3 August 1977, 24 hours after being picked up by members of the Security Branch outside his Overport, Durban, flat. An inquest found Haffeejee (26) had hanged himself. His family believes that he died as a result of torture and that the hanging was staged. NPA spokesperson Bulelwa Makeke said Batohi had decided to take a 'holistic approach' and look at the deaths of other detainees under similar circumstances to try to obtain evidence. However, she had acknowledged that this approach 'presents challenges' and had written to the Justice Ministry to reopen the inquests.