

The response to the death of Neil Aggett has been overwhelming. In many parts of the world people have expressed their outrage and pledged their solidarity for the condemnation of the oppressive system that is responsible for his death.

These feelings have been seen and heard at many solidarity meetings and memorial services held in Neil's honour.

Two days before the funeral a memorial service was held at Baragwanath Hospital by the Transvaal Medical Society (TMS), now known as the Health Workers' Association (HWA). This meeting was attended by about 500 people, mostly from the hospital. Speakers paid tribute to Neil as a true health worker.

The funeral service and burial service were held on Saturday the 13th of February. Over 5000 people from all over the country crowded into St. Mary's Cathedral to take part in the funeral service before the burial.



Among the people were over 200 nurses clearly identified by their white uniforms and powerful unity.

"When the nurses arrived in their buses, singing and clapping, and marched into the cathedral, we were all stunned " one of the funeral organisers said.

"We were so dumbstruck when the nurses arrived that we couldn't get our equipment to work" said one of the many people recording the funeral service.

During the service the nurses heard Jan Theron, general secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers' Union (AFCWU) pay tribute to Neil as a doctor at Baragwanath Hospital and lay the blame for Neil's death with the South African government.

Many speakers later stated that his work had been to establish a strong, united, democratic trade union movement.

After the service, hundreds of cars and buses followed a crowd which swelled to over 15 000. The crowd, led by the union banners, and singing freedom songs, wound its way along the 15 km route to Westpark Cemetery. They passed many security and riot police armed with sjamboks and teargas.

At the burial service many speakers voiced their praise for the ideals Neil had stood for and expressed the dedication of their organisations to continue the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

"Neil wanted to put the causes of illness right, and believed that the working class could do this. But he also believed that worker organisation without democracy was meaningless", said Dennis Rubel, a colleague of Neil's and AFCWU doctor at their Paarl clinic. "Most of all we must show the government that for every Neil that dies there will be a 1 000 others to take his place", said John Phendlane, president of AFCWU.