



**MINISTRY: SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Minister Goodenough Kodwa's speech at the HRC'S  
citation of honour for late Chief Albert Luthuli, Groutville,  
Kwa-Dukuza, Kwazulu Natal, 27 March 2024**

Programme Director

Chairperson of SA Human Rights Commission, Rev Chris Nissen

SAHRC Commissioners

- Commissioner Philile Ntuli
- Commissioner Sandra Makoasha
- Commissioner Nomahlubi Kwinana

The Mayor of Kwa-Dukuza Local Municipality, Ms Lindi Nhaca

Chairperson of Chief Albert Luthuli Museum,

CEO of Chief Albert Luthuli Foundation, Dr Mchunu

Members of the Council

Members of the Luthuli Family

All recipients of the Citations of Honour

Distinguished Guests

Members of Media

Members of Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good day,

It is befitting that we meet during Human Rights Month to honour amongst others the late iNkosi Albert Luthuli, a man who is an embodiment of human rights. During the month of March, we



commemorate and honor those who were slain and persecuted during the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, kwaLanga in Cape Town, as well as in Tinarha in the Eastern Cape. These atrocities stood as potent symbols of the brutal realities of apartheid South Africa.

It is a singular honour that I am part of and get to address this auspicious occasion.

Human Rights are the cornerstone of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Our constitution draws its inspiration from the Freedom Charter, that seminal document that envisaged a South Africa that was free from all forms of discrimination. A South Africa that was non-racial, non-sexist, non-tribal, non-creedal, but the South Africa that belonged to all who lived in it, black and white. This is what Chief Albert Luthuli fought for and lived for.

This year we are celebrating 30 years of our democracy and freedom which guaranteed us of our liberties, freedoms and human rights. It is therefore befitting that today, during Human Rights Month, we are celebrating Nkosi Albert Luthuli who was a life-long proponent of Human Rights for all.

Prior to and during the period that Nkosi Luthuli served as President of the African National Congress, the South African Government enacted several laws that restricted the rights of the majority of South Africans, disenfranchised them, and repressed any organisation that resisted Apartheid.

As President of the ANC between 1952 to 1967 Nkosi Luthuli was a proponent of non-violent but peaceful protest – hence the

Defiance Campaign of 1952, which was marked by peaceful resistance and deliberate disregard of discriminatory laws without provoking any violent conflict. These included mass gatherings, walking through “white’s only” parks, refusing to carry passbooks. As the resistance to Apartheid gathered momentum, the Congress of the People Campaign led to the development of the Freedom Charter in 1955, the founding document of the South African Constitution.

Nkosi Albert Luthuli had to suffer in the hands of the apartheid regime because of his steadfastness and determination in his fight for human rights. He defied the apartheid regime when it wanted to use his chieftainship as part of the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1953 that sought to make chiefs or amakhosi agents of the apartheid regime. As a result of this defiance, Nkosi Albert Luthuli was stripped of his Chieftainship, subjected to 4 bans and confined to 15km’s around his house in Groutville, arrested for treason and jailed, which was only suspended because of ill health.

Considering how much iNkosi Luthuli suffered under apartheid regime, it becomes clear that his stance of peaceful resistance was therefore not a sign of weakness or wanting to get off easily, but a principle that more could be achieved without resorting to violent means.

Drawing on his legacy, to foster a culture of human rights involves several key principles and actions, namely:

**Non-violent Resistance:** Luthuli was a proponent of non-violent resistance in the face of oppression. This principle can be applied in contemporary contexts to promote peaceful protests, civil disobedience, and dialogue as means to address human

rights violations. Our leaders chose a negotiated settlement instead of the much-anticipated bloodbath given the extreme conditions that our people lived under during the apartheid regime. This would be another way in which Chief Luthuli's legacy was honoured.

**Education and Awareness:** Luthuli believed in the power of education to bring about social change. Fostering a culture of human rights requires educating people about their rights, the history of human rights struggles, and the importance of upholding these rights for all individuals regardless of race, gender, religion, or other factors. As a government, we have the entire month of March dedicated to Human Rights, as part of National Days, during which there is more focus on educating our communities on human rights. Raising awareness about human rights empowers individuals to stand up for their own rights and the rights of others. It encourages people to become active participants in promoting and defending human rights within their communities and beyond.

**Political Engagement:** iNkosi Luthuli was actively involved in political activism and leadership. Today, this legacy can be honoured by encouraging civic engagement, advocating for political reforms that protect human rights, and supporting leaders who prioritize human rights in their policies and governance. It is therefore important that our young people are encouraged to participate in determining their future, through political activism, starting with exercising their right to vote. Apathy is no option!

**Interfaith Dialogue:** Luthuli promoted interfaith dialogue as a means of fostering unity and understanding among different religious communities. Emphasizing the importance of religious tolerance and cooperation can contribute to a culture that respects the rights and beliefs of all individuals. Our constitution encourages and protects freedom of association, hence the establishment of the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic (CRL) Rights Commission.

**Social Justice Advocacy:** Luthuli was committed to social justice and equality. His legacy can inspire contemporary efforts to address systemic injustices, including poverty, discrimination, and inequality in access to resources and opportunities.

**International Solidarity:** Luthuli sought international support for the anti-apartheid movement. Today, fostering a culture of human rights involves advocating for global cooperation and solidarity to address transnational human rights issues such as refugee rights, climate justice, and global health equity. In November 2023 South Africa applied to the International Court of Justice, arguing that Israel is contravening the Genocide Convention in Gaza. This was and it still is in keeping with our values that cherish the culture of human rights for all citizens of the world. The South African government is living up to the prophesy of Nkosi Albert Luthuli when he said, "I personally believe that here in South Africa, with all our diversities of colour and race, we will show the world a new pattern of democracy. I think there is a challenge to us in South Africa to set a new example for the world. Let us not side-step that task".

**Community Empowerment:** Luthuli emphasized the importance of grassroots organizing and community empowerment. Building strong, inclusive communities where individuals are empowered to advocate for their rights is essential for fostering a culture of human rights.

**Leadership by Example:** Luthuli led by example, demonstrating courage, integrity, and commitment to justice. Honouring his legacy involves promoting ethical leadership and holding individuals and institutions accountable for upholding human rights standards.

By drawing on Chief Albert Luthuli's legacy, individuals and organizations can contribute to fostering a culture where human rights are valued, protected, and promoted for all people.

It is no coincidence that eight years after being elected as the President of the African National Congress in December 1952, Nkosi Albert Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960, the first such award to be given to any leader in Africa. He travelled to Oslo in the company of his wife, Nokukhanya Luthuli to accept the prize in December 1961. Luthuli, as a person who believed in the Pan-African ideals, acknowledged the entire continent during the Nobel Prize reception ceremony, saying that he was receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of Africa.

He said, "I therefore regard this award as a recognition of the sacrifice made by many of all races, particularly the African people who have endured and suffered so much for so long. It can only be on behalf of the people of South Africa, especially the freedom-loving people, that I accept this award, that I acknowledge this honour. I accept it also as an honour not only

to South Africa, but for the whole continent of Africa, to this continent, Mother Africa!”.

On this auspicious day, I would like to thank the South African Human Rights Commission for presenting Nkosi Albert Luthuli, President of the African National Congress (ANC), Nobel Laureate, and with the prestigious Citation of Honour.

During the first 30 years of our democracy, several initiatives were undertaken by government to honour the contribution of iNkosi Luthuli.

We established this Luthuli Museum in Groutville, installed and unveiled his statue in KwaDukuza Municipal Grounds, and restored the graves of Nkosi Luthuli and Mrs Nokukhanya Luthuli. We also refurbished and restored the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (Groutville) in which he was a deacon and where he lied in state at his passing. We worked with the University of KwaZulu Natal to award Nkosi Albert Luthuli an Honorary Doctorate (*Honoris Causa*) in Law for remarkable achievements in his lifetime. We have also placed a plaque on the site of his death. These commemorative acts serve to perpetuate the memory of Nkosi Albert Luthuli. They are also meant to immortalise this political giant and colossus that so many of our leaders after him have acknowledged as their mentor.

The contribution of Mrs Nokukhanya Luthuli has been recognised with the renaming of the street that leads to the museum. We have done this deliberately because we know that Mrs Luthuli was always with Nkosi Albert Luthuli during all his trials and tribulations.

Secondly, in honour of Nkosi Luthuli's dedication to promoting human rights, The President of the Republic of South Africa has awarded the Order of Luthuli, one of the highest insignias given to "South Africans who have made a meaningful contribution to the struggle for democracy, and human rights, nation-building, justice, peace and conflict resolution."

Similarly, the Citation of Honour is awarded to Nkosi Luthuli commending him for his invaluable contribution to, and promotion of Human Rights, non-violence, peace and conflict resolution.

In conclusion Programme director, I have to say that it has not been an easy road, but the democratic government has made a lot of strides in the 30years of democracy, in our efforts to realise access to the rights entrenched in our Bill of rights.

With the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, a human rights culture was made the cornerstone of the new constitutional dispensation and a wide-ranging set of human rights, including socio-economic rights, was inscribed in a Bill of Rights.

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Since 1994, Government has embarked on the mammoth task of transforming the entire justice system by putting in place the foundation and pillars to build and sustain our new democratic constitutional dispensation. Improving access to justice for all and enhancing the rule of law have been critical priorities for Government. Our main objectives have been to bring the justice structures and systems in line with the Constitution, to re-



establish trust and public confidence in our justice institutions and to restore the legitimacy of the system.

We have established strong institutions to protect the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all people.

In addition, our courts continue to deliver judgments and develop case law to enhance and protect these rights and to provide guidance on the interpretation of these rights.

Since 1994, a substantial body of new laws has emerged from all levels of government to fulfil the mandate presented by the Constitution. Key legislation includes the three “human rights” acts, namely the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA); Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA).

Unique to South Africa are the creatures of the constitution and its institutions established to protect this constitutional democracy such as the Public Protector, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Electoral Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality and the Commission of Religious Linguistics and Culture. These institutions are free from the legacies of apartheid and serve as centres of excellence in their specific areas. We have succeeded in building

democratic institutions and in ridding our statute book of old apartheid laws.

The number of complaints laid, and investigations undertaken highlight the how deep seeded the issues are. However, that it opens such issues provides room for change and transformation to eradicate systemic issues. Without these institutions, we would have taken much longer to address the legacy of apartheid.

It is without doubt that these constitutional imperatives include respect for and promotion of human rights as articulated in section 7(2) of the Constitution. The imperatives also have a bearing on the aspirations and commitments outlined in the Preamble of the Constitution including among other to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; and to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.

The constitutional values serve as the backbone guiding our nation to attain our constitutional aspirations. These values are entrenched under section 1 of the Constitution which include human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; non-racialism and

non- sexism; universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness; and the supremacy and the constitution and the rule of law.

Programme Director, I am proud to say that as a nation we have truly benefited from and honoured iNkosi Luthuli's legacy. Chief Luthuli, once said, "Our interest in freedom is not confined to ourselves alone. We are interested in the liberation of all oppressed people in the whole of Africa and in the world. Our active interest in the extension of freedom to all people denied it, makes us ally ourselves with freedom forces in the world".

South Africa has long held that the policies of the State of Israel are akin to those of the apartheid state in terms of erasing the human rights of the people living in Gaza and the West Bank. South Africa could therefore not become a bystander when the whole community of Palestine is placed under brute force applied by the state of Israel. Reminiscent of Luthuli's teachings, the Republic of South Africa has given counsel to the whole world to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict amicably.

Two days ago, on 25 March 2024, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Upholding the right of every person to their inherent human rights is important not only on the international stage but also on the personal and interpersonal level.

It is important that we are all adherents to the application of human rights in our everyday interactions.

We must oppose the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution, and what is disturbing is the prevalence of gender-based violence and femicide, and the kidnapping and trafficking of women and children from South Africa and other parts of the world.

We must, as a nation uphold the human rights that Nkosi Luthuli championed. By so doing, we will show the whole world a new pattern of democracy.