

OFFICIAL MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR

*Minister Jackson Mphikwa Mthembu*

**Monday, 25 January 2021**



**5 June 1958 – 21 January 2021**

# *Obituary of Minister Jackson Mphikwa Mthembu*

Minister Jackson Mphikwa Mthembu was born and bred at Schoongezicht farm in Emalahleni (formerly Witbank) in Mpumalanga on 5 June 1958. He was the first-born son of Mama Rosie Nantoni Mthembu.

## **Schooling and politics**

He started his schooling at Schoongezicht American Board Primary School and Kromkrans Farm School before moving to Elukhanyisweni Secondary School in Emalahleni, where he was a student leader during the 1976 students' uprisings. Minister Mthembu was an anti-apartheid activist who formed part of the liberation struggle inside South Africa. He cut his political teeth in student politics in the 1970s and his activism continued when he was a student at the University of Fort Hare, resulting in his expulsion in 1980.

He contributed immensely to the establishment of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the predecessor of the National Union of Metal Workers, in which he served as a senior shop steward at Highveld Steel Corporation, where he worked as a training officer and later promoted to be one of the first few black steel production supervisors in the industry. Minister Mthembu was a leading member of the eMalahleni Civic Association and also led the local branches of the National Education Crisis and the Detainees Parents' Support Committee, both affiliates of the then United Democratic Front (UDF).

During the State of Emergency in the 1980s, he was subjected to constant harassment and persecution by the security forces of the apartheid regime, resulting in several months of detention without trial, mostly in solitary confinement. Acts of persecution by agents of the apartheid regime included the petrol bombing of his house in Emalahleni and being subjected to various forms of torture at police stations.

Between 1986 and 1988, he was charged with sabotage, treason and terrorism, and tried together with 30 other activists from Emalahleni in what was known as the Bethal Terrorism Trial. After his acquittal, the apartheid security police continued with their harassment and intimidation, which led him to leave

Emalahleni and find refuge in Soweto and Alexandra in Gauteng. As an “internal exile” – which seriously disrupted his family life – he was, amongst other hiding places, sheltered by the late Mama “Gogo” Margaret Stofile in Soweto.

### **Leadership roles**

He was elected as the Deputy Regional Secretary of the UDF in the then Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging region (now Gauteng) under the leadership of the late Mama Albertina Sisulu. Through his involvement with the South African Council of Churches under the leadership of Reverend Frank Chikane, he joined the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) solidarity campaign that comprised various civic groups, including the religious community, business and taxi associations under the banner of the UDF.

He was part of the UDF and the progressive forces leadership collective that supported SWAPO’s election campaign by providing, among others, minibuss taxis to transport voters during the first democratic elections in what was then South West Africa (now Namibia). SWAPO won the elections, which led to the liberation of Namibia from then apartheid South Africa.

Following the unbanning of political parties in 1990, Minister Mthembu was entrusted with the responsibility of leading the Emalahleni branch of the African National Congress (ANC). Between 1990 and 1994, he worked full-time as ANC spokesperson in Mpumalanga, and participated as ANC staff component at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa negotiations.

He served in several strategic roles, including as a member of the ANC Mpumalanga Provincial Executive Committee. He had been part of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) since 2007.

After the first democratic elections in 1994, he was part of the first ANC members of Parliament contingent deployed in the then Senate (now National Council of Provinces), where he contributed to the crafting of the democratic Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. He was later appointed as the Member of the Executive Council for Public Works, Roads and Transport in Mpumalanga, serving under the successive premierships of Dr Mathews Phosa and Mr Thabang Makwetla.

He was the National Spokesperson of the ANC under President Nelson Mandela from 1995 to 1997, and was appointed to the same role again from 2009 to 2014. While based at Luthuli House in Johannesburg, one of the structures

he chaired was the ANC Caster Semanya Support Committee, which included the late Mama Winnie Mandela. The responsibility of this committee was to give practical support to Caster, against the inhumane treatment, abuse and discrimination she was subjected to by the International Association of Athletics Federations.

During his tenure as the National Spokesperson of the ANC, Minister Mthembu led the ANC NEC Subcommittee on Communications, which asserted the ANC in the battle of ideas, championing media diversity, transformation and accountability mechanisms.

He rejoined Parliament in 2014 and served as the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs. He was subsequently appointed as the Chief Whip of the ANC from 2016 up to the end of the fifth term of Parliament in 2019.

### **Minister in The Presidency**

After the 2019 national and provincial elections, he was appointed as the Minister in The Presidency under the Sixth Administration led by President Cyril Ramaphosa. As the Executive Authority, he oversaw The Presidency; Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; Statistics South Africa; Government Communication and Information System, as well as the entities Brand South Africa and the Media Development and Diversity Agency, and he also chaired the National Planning Commission.

Amongst his Cabinet responsibilities, as delegated by President Ramaphosa, under the African Union he led the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative, the National Conventional Arms Control Committee and many other inter-ministerial committees.

In addition, between April and June 2020, Minister Mthembu acted as the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies. He ensured leadership stability and sound financial management in the departments and entities under his leadership. He steered and provided leadership with transparency, commitment and confidence.

### **Humble servant of the people**

Minister Mthembu epitomised the values of unity, selflessness, collective leadership and honesty, with immense kindness and great humility. As a communicator par excellence, he remained a humble servant of the people, always showing patience, humility, respect and a sense of humour equally with all people.

He has left a unique imprint on the type of public service we continue to strive to build and the kind of government communicator South Africa deserves.

Minister Mthembu continued living amongst his people in Mbombela and Emalahleni where his ANC membership resided (in Solly Moroape branch), even after his appointment as a member of the National Executive.

He will always be remembered as a humble, selfless, hardworking, honest, disciplined, consistent, trusted giant and an outstanding leader, a unifier, a freedom fighter, and an upright and selfless public servant who put his country first.

He dedicated his life to our country and its people, and worked tirelessly towards creating a better South Africa for all.

He was also an activist, a patriot, a community builder, a mentor, a brother, father and husband. His death has robbed our nation of an exemplary leader. Our nation has lost a dedicated and strong defender of our constitutional democracy.

Minister Mthembu passed away on Thursday, 21 January 2021 from complications related to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). He is survived by his siblings, wife Mrs Thembi Mthembu, their children and a grandchild.

### **In memory of Minister Mthembu, let us step up our fight against COVID-19**

Let us emulate him by putting our nation first. We can do so by making a personal contribution to the fight against COVID-19, which includes:

- wearing a mask in public that covers our nose and mouth;
- regularly washing our hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitiser;
- maintaining social distancing of at least 2.5 metres; and
- avoiding large gatherings, especially in confined places.

*Hamba kahle Mvelase, wena owavela enyandeni yemikhonto  
yakaMabaso, Qhudeni, Hem-hem, Vela bembentsela!*

# *Programme*

**Programme Director: Deputy Minister Thembi Siweya**

- 10:00** National Anthem
- 10:05** Opening Prayer by **Reverend Smangaliso Mkhathshwa**
- 10:10** Welcoming remarks by **Ms Mbali Hlophe**  
**Gauteng MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation**
- 10:20** Tribute by **Mr Sibusiso Ngalwa**  
**South African National Editors' Forum**
- 10:30** Tribute by **Mr Musi Skosana**  
**Chief of Staff: Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation**
- 10:40** Tribute by **Mr Risenga Maluleke – Statistician-General**
- 10:50** Tribute by **General Vusi Sindane**
- 11:00** Tribute by **Mr Mondli Gungubele – Member of Parliament**
- 11:10** Tribute by **Ms Dorries Dlakude – Deputy Chief Whip of the ANC**
- 11:20** Tribute by **Ms Sindi Chikunga**  
**Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration**
- 11:30** Tribute by **Mr Senzo Mchunu**  
**Minister of Public Service and Administration**
- 11:40** Tribute by **Mr Ronald Lamola**  
**Minister of Justice and Correctional Services**
- 11:50** Tribute by **Dr Naledi Pandor**  
**Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**

- 12:00** Remarks on behalf of the Mthembu family: **Mr Teddy Gomba**
- 12:10** **Keynote Address by Deputy President David Mabuza**
- 12:40** Vote of thanks by **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**  
**Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs**
- 12:45** Closing remarks

*Venue:*

**Virtual (Zoom platform)**

**Zoom Link**

**<https://gcis.zoom.us/j/97451972206>**

**Meeting ID: 974 5197 2206**

# *National Anthem*

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika  
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,  
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,  
Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,  
O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho,  
O se boloke,  
O se boloke setjhaba sa heso,  
Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.

Uit die blou van onse hemel,  
Uit die diepte van ons see,  
Oor ons ewige gebergtes,  
Waar die kranse antwoord gee,  
Sounds the call to come together,  
And united we shall stand,  
Let us live and strive for freedom,  
In South Africa our land.