



arts and culture

Department:
Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

15 March 2010

Media statement

South Africa commemorates the 50th anniversary of Human Rights Day

As announced by President Jacob Zuma in his state of the nation address, South Africa will this year mark the 50th anniversary of Human Rights Day. In order to honour the 180 injured individuals and the 69 heroes and heroines who were killed during the protest, government has decided to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March, Human Rights Day at Sharpeville Cricket Pitch next to George Thabe soccer stadium, Gauteng Province.

Accompanied by the Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms. Lulu Xingwana and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr. Jeff Radebe, the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Kgalema Motlanthe will speak at the event. In addition to speeches, the programme will include an interdenominational church service, laying of wreaths, unveiling of a plaque and cultural performances.

This anniversary marks a significant milestone in the history of the struggle against apartheid and colonialism in South Africa and in the rest of the African continent. The massacre represents a watershed moment in the history of South Africa because it triggered a number of events which intensified the struggle against apartheid. These events include the banning of liberation movements and the declaration of the first state of emergency.

This year, the commemoration of Human Rights Day will take place under the theme: *Working together we can do more to protect human rights*. The theme is a call for unity in a national effort to strengthen our freedom and democracy. It is also a call to all South Africans to celebrate our new Constitution and to raise awareness about our human rights especially amongst young people.

Significantly, the anniversary takes place when South Africa on behalf of the African continent is hosting the biggest sporting event, the FIFA Soccer World Cup. Moreover, it happens as the nation celebrates the release of one of the world's human rights champions and the first President of a democratic South Africa, Mr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. His release marked the death of the apartheid system that was characterized by the abuse of human rights and the birth of a human rights centred society.

In addition to the national commemoration, the other provinces will host their own events and cultural performances.

Government hopes that this year's Human Rights Day commemoration will renew our commitment towards building a non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and democratic society.



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The programme will take place as follows:

- 06:00 Interdenominational church service at the Roman Catholic Church
08:00 Wreath laying at the Phelindaba Cemetery by *the family of victims*, the Premier of Gauteng, *Ms. N Mokonyane* and the Executive Mayor of Sedibeng, Cllr. *SM Mofokeng* and MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, *Ms. N Moerane*
09:30 Laying of wreaths at the Sharpeville Memorial site by the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, *Mr. K Motlanthe*, Minister of Arts and Culture, *Ms. L Xingwana* and Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, *Mr. J Radebe*, Premier of Gauteng, *Ms. N Mokonyane* and the Executive Mayor of Sedibeng, *Cllr. SM Mofokeng*
11:00 Official programme

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