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### **LAW SOCIETY PAYS TRIBUTE TO JUDGE FIKILE BAM**

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) is saddened by the death of Land Claims Court Judge President Fikile Bam. 'On behalf of the attorneys' profession, we pay tribute to a warm and humorous person, and one of the icons of the struggle for democracy and the rights of the poor and disempowered in South Africa,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Nano Matlala and Praveen Sham. 'As a pioneer of the Land Claims Court, Judge Bam contributed immensely to land reform jurisprudence. He will be missed by the legal profession and by the still landless majority of South Africa as poverty, law and land remain intertwined in our country,' they added.

Judge Bam's legal career started in the attorneys' profession, having been admitted as an attorney in 1978. He practised as a legal practitioner in the Eastern Cape and was the Director of the Legal Resources Centre in Port Elizabeth. At the time of his appointment to the Bench in 1995 he had been a director at Deneys Reitz in Johannesburg. Judge Bam carried his liberation ideology as a member of the Yu Chi Chan Club through to the struggles of the poor and landless in the legal arena, particularly in his involvement in public interest law with the Legal Resources Centre and Lawyers for Human Rights.

His propensity for discipline, fairness and justice for all was evidenced early during his time as a political prisoner on Robben Island. Former President Nelson Mandela recorded this in *Long Walk to Freedom* where he noted that Fikile Bam was appointed to preside over meetings of the committee representing prisoners. The committee later became known as *Ulundi* and acted as a disciplinary committee for prisoners. Also, during his interview with the Judicial Service Commission prior to his appointment to the Bench, he was asked whether his background would lead him to be less fair and just with those who had land, as opposed to the landless. He told the JSC that he was a landowner himself (his family had obtained freehold title to land) and that he was sensitive to the apprehensions and concerns of landowners too.

The Law Society of South Africa extends the condolences of the attorneys' profession to Judge Bam's family and friends.

May his soul rest in peace. Lala ngoxolo

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, PRAVEEN SHAM AND NANO MATLALA**

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**Editor's note:**

The Law Society of South Africa is a member of the SADC Lawyers Association.

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 20 500 attorneys and 5 300 candidate attorneys.