



PRESS RELEASE

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LAW SOCIETY SADDENED AT DEATH OF FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE PIUS LANGA

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) is deeply saddened at the death of former Chief Justice Pius Langa.

'On behalf of the attorneys' profession, we pay tribute to Justice Langa. As a human rights lawyer, his practice as an advocate focused on the struggle against the apartheid system. As the first black Chief Justice of South Africa, he headed a transforming judiciary and legal profession with strength, humility and dignity. Throughout his career in the profession, starting as a court interpreter and messenger, then as a prosecutor and magistrate, as well as later as an advocate and judge, he was and remained a humble and vigilant proponent of the rights of the marginalised, oppressed and underprivileged,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons, Kathleen Matolo-Dlepu and David Bekker.

They add: 'Justice Langa was highly respected as a judge and jurist also beyond our borders, having served on numerous commissions. His membership of the Judicial Integrity Group which compiled the Bangalore Principles for Judicial Ethics, speaks to his qualities and convictions. Justice Langa always echoed the principle that judicial independence is a prerequisite to the rule of law and a fundamental guarantee of a fair trial. He repeatedly stressed that eternal vigilance is required because the principles that underlie our democratic order are so precious and so valuable that they should never be put at risk.'

The LSSA acknowledges Justice Langa's role as a founder member of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – one of the LSSA's six constituent members – and his leadership of Nadel as its president from 1988 to 1994.

The LSSA also acknowledges Justice Langa's efforts in accelerating the appointment of women to the Bench through a special training programme, which saw a number of new women judges appointed. The LSSA supported this programme by providing training venues. 'His calls for women in the legal profession to receive sufficiently challenging and rewarding work and more briefs from government and corporates, remain valid today,' say Ms Matolo-Dlepu and Mr Bekker.

Justice Langa's passion for the training and further education of the judiciary in general were evident in his role in establishing the South African Judicial Education Institute.

The LSSA extends the condolences of the attorneys' profession to Justice Langa's family, friends and close colleagues. Their loss is our great loss too.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, KATHLEEN MATOLO-DLEPU AND DAVID BEKKER

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Editor's note:

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 21 400 attorneys and 5 800 candidate attorneys.