

Nelson Mandela

WAS AN INSPIRATION TO EVERYONE



By
SULTAN JESSA

South Africa's former president Nelson Mandela, who was a global icon and also a mythical figure, is gone.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate died at the age of 95 after spending more than three months at a hospital and at his home with recurring lung infection.

"Our nation has lost its greatest son," President Jacob Zuma announced on South African TV.

Mandela, more affectionately known by his clan name of Madiba, led his country's transition from white ruled minority and oppression under apartheid, in the 1990s. The giant among men is dead but his legacy will live on.

I never met Mandela.

My journalism career started when many African countries were bitterly struggling to gain freedom from colonial rule.

My native Tanzania, which received its independence in 1961, played a crucial and significant role in the liberation of many African nations like South Africa and Mozambique.

This East African country,

despite great risk, offered a safe home to train freedom fighters waging wars to achieve independence.

I started hearing and learning about Mandela and his political party, the African National Congress, in the 1960s. Mandela spent 27 years in prison for his political activities.

He was an incredible man and lived an incredible life promoting reconciliation and urging his nation of black and white to heal all wounds and help in building a new nation.

The former president spent almost three decades of physical and psychological torture in the jails.

It was during this time, he was subjected to bitter racial hatred.

Mandela became the world's most revered statesman and was often likened to India's father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi and US civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Soon after he died, glowing tributes started pouring from leaders and others all over the world.

Many around the world were influenced by his selfless struggle.

The largest number of world leaders will join South Africans to bid Mandela farewell.



Africa has produced some great leaders like Kenya's

former president Jomo Kenyatta, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah.

Kenyatta, whose son Uhuru now rules over Kenya, also suffered under colonialism but

he too never advocated violence and revenge.

Both, Kenyatta and Mandela showed a remarkable lack of bitterness.

Unlike many other African leaders, Mandela stepped down after just one term as president.

With the death of Mandela, the world has lost a great visionary.

One of the many defining moments of his relentless efforts to reconcile deeply divided communities came when Mandela visited Betsie Verwoerd, widow of the architect of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd, who had effectively put him in jail.

It was Verwoerd who forced Mandela to

go underground.

He was eventually arrested, prosecuted and jailed for life in 1964 for acts of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government.

After his release, Mandela changed the course of history and became a global icon.

However, all is not rosy for South Africa.

The gap between rich and poor is widening.

The bitterness has been simmering for years.

Many of the past and current leaders were reluctant to do or say anything while Mandela was alive.

With Mandela gone, it remains to be seen what may be in store for the grieving nation.

Growing perceptions of official corruption only compounds people's frustrations.

South African leaders must show the same value of inclusion and fairness that inspired Mandela.

*“Mandela
inspired
millions”*