



World Council of Churches

President of the World Council of Churches representing Africa

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A Tribute:

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela on Thursday, April 5, 2018,

St George Cathedral, Cape Town

As President of the World Council of Churches (WCC) I, Prof Rev Dr Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel, hereby extend my most heartfelt condolences to the family of Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, in the hope that it would serve as comfort in a time of great sadness. Already in 1998, the late Nelson Mandela expressed his gratitude to the WCC for their support of the struggles of the oppressed for their freedom:

The WCC helped voice the international community's insistence that human rights are the rights of all people everywhere. In doing so you helped vindicate the struggles of the oppressed for their freedom To us in South and Southern Africa, and indeed the entire continent, the WCC has always been known as a champion of the oppressed and the exploited... the people of South and Southern Africa will always remember the WCC with gratitude.

Madikizela-Mandela became the public face of the Struggle during the heydays of apartheid. She was indeed the voice of the voiceless. She was the embodiment of the struggle against racism, patriarchy, gender-based violence, socio-eco injustice. She stood courageously on the side of the oppressed, the exploited and the disadvantaged. With resilience she fought racist discrimination, resisted the violations of her human dignity (especially the 491 days in solitary confinement), and opposed the embeddedness of patriarchy in society. Madikizela-Mandela's unbending spirit, through years of imprisonment, banishment, harassment, is challenging us on a profound way. Mama Winnie will be remember dearly for her rare ability to reconcile opposing parties as well as her uncompromising advocacy for the creation of a more egalitarian society.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's life epitomized in more than one way those who hunger and thirst for justice and liberation in all spheres of society (Belhar Confession Article 4: *that the church, belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others*). Her courageous defiance was, and is, in more than one way, an inspiration for all freedom loving people across the globe.

She ran her race.

The thoughts and prayers of the ecumenical community are with Madikizela-Mandela's family.

Scripture reading:

Isaiah 57:1-2

*The righteous, perish, and no one takes it to heart;
the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.*

Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Prof Rev Dr Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M.A. Plaatjies-Van Huffel". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

President World Council of Churches (Africa)