

FORMER PRESIDENT MANDELA HONOURED (POSTHUMOUSLY) WITH THE 2017 INCONFIDÊNCIA MEDAL BY THE STATE OF MINAS GERAIS

On 21 April 2017, former president Nelson Mandela was bestowed with the *Inconfidência Medal*, the Great Necklace which is the highest honour that is often conferred to outstanding international figures who contributed to the freedom and justice of their people and have devoted their lives in service of humanity that has greater impact to the whole world.

Ambassador Mashimbye received the Award on behalf of the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Mandela family.

In conferring the Award to Mr Mandela (posthumously), Governor of Minas Gerais Mr Pimentel has this to say about one of the greatest African states men that ever lived:

Mr Mandela was a political activist who stood out for the capacity of dialogue, for the power of aggregation and incessant struggle for social justice, democracy and equal rights. A symbol of the struggle against apartheid, a regime that segregated blacks, who were not recognized for the majority of political, economic and social rights in South Africa, was imprisoned for 27 years. His release was the object of intense international campaign, becoming, in 1994, the first black president of the history of his country.

In 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNNGA) declared the 18 July (date of his birth in 1918) as the Nelson Mandela International Day as a way to value the struggle for freedom, justice and democracy around the world.

In his acceptance speech, Ambassador Mashimbye said he was humbled to receive the honor on behalf of a leader so acclaimed in his country and the world at large an international icon and a moral compass.

"This award symbolizes freedom, equality and justice. These were in fact the values that Nelson Mandela supported, since he was and remains the embodiment of the power of love and hope. He believed in the power of forgiveness. He had faith and confidence in his people's ability to realize the dream of a free, united and prosperous South Africa, "said the ambassador, thanking" the governor and the people of Minas Gerais for the invitation that was made to represent my country And the people of South Africa on this auspicious occasion. "said Ambassador JN Mashimbye

President Mandela was a firm believer in the principles of "equity, justice, cohesion and inclusiveness in governance," which made him "an exceptional transformative and visionary leader, endowed with unique and admirable qualities and who maintained these values".

"His vision of freedom for all without distinction continues to resonate true. He envisioned a South Africa in which all its citizens would enjoy equal rights - a South Africa that is non-racial and non-sexist, belongs to all who live there, "he said.

Today's occasion gives us the opportunity to remind ourselves that we all have within us the possibility to live up to its legacy, "Ambassador Mashimbye added.

He expressed his delight in representing his country during an event that marks the commemoration of the life and times of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier affectionately known as Tiradentes. "Tiradentes, during his lifetime, became the pioneer of what is now known as the Federative Republic of Brazil. Now, at his death, he is the inspiration for freedom, justice, equality and human dignity, "he concluded.