

**VIRTUAL ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO,
AMBASSADOR CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
COMMEMORATION.**

21 April 2021

Programme Director, MEC Thandi Moraka

Members of our provincial Legislature;

Members of Executive Council;

Representative of the Human Rights Commission,
Commissioner Victor Mavhidula;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me join our Programme Director and start by welcoming all of you to this important celebration of our human rights.

This year we celebrate our Human Rights Day under what is known as the New Normal.

Covid-19 has changed our way of doing things, including how we commemorate and celebrate important days such as this.

However, we are the first to accept that the most important human right is the right to life itself.

All the limitations on our freedoms and on our way of doing things are aimed at protecting our right to life.

These Covid-19 restrictions may appear to be taking some of our rights but all is done to protect the right to life and the right to good health.

Today is a very important day in our country's national calendar – it is a day that belongs to all of us. The rights we are celebrating today are the rights that belong to every human being, Black or White, citizens and non-citizens.

The Human Rights Day is a national day that is commemorated annually on 21st March to remind South Africans about the sacrifices which were made for us to attain the freedom and democracy we are enjoying today.

This day provides us as a country with an opportunity to reflect on progress made in the promotion and protection of human rights.

This year we commemorate Human Rights month under the theme: “The year of unity, socio-economic renewal and nation-building.”

There is no doubt that following the devastations caused by the coronavirus, we need to unite as South Africans to renew our social lives and our economy. We need to rebuild our nation to become a winning nation that we will all be proud to be part of.

Programme Director;

It is also important to remind ourselves about the origins of this day.

The period around 1960s were characterized by massive defiance and protest against apartheid and racism across the country.

The people were tired about apartheid policies that dehumanized and stripped them of all their God-given human rights.

On 21 March 1960, the community of Sharpeville and Langa townships, like their fellow compatriots across the country, embarked on a protest march to protest against pass laws.

The apartheid police shot and killed 69 of the protesters at Sharpeville, many of them were shot at the back while fleeing. Many other people were killed in other parts of the country.

This tragedy came to be known as the **Sharpeville Massacre**.

This brutal and barbaric killing of innocent people helped to expose the apartheid government's violation of human rights to the whole world.

We commemorate this day as a way to pay tribute and honour all those who fought for our liberation and the rights we enjoy today.

Programme Director;

South Africa has one of the most progressive constitution in the world.

The Constitution is the ultimate protector of our Human Rights, which were previously denied to the majority of our people under apartheid.

We commemorate Human Rights Day to reinforce our commitment to the Bill of Rights as enshrined in our Constitution.

Our constitution provides that:

- Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- That everyone has inherent dignity and have their dignity respected and protected.
- That everyone has a right to freedom of movement and to reside anywhere in the country.
- That everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, and most importantly,
- That everyone has the right to life.

These are the rights that no one can ever take away from you.

Over and above these rights, our constitution recognizes another category of rights known as the **socio-economic rights**.

These are the right to education, right to housing, right to decent standard of living and the right to basic healthcare.

As the custodian of the democratic constitution, the ANC government has and must continue to commit more resources towards programmes that seek to promote and ensure access to these important basic rights.

This government has done a great work to advance our people's rights to decent housing, access to water, and access to quality education, social development and primary healthcare for everyone.

Today more people have access to safe drinking water than ever before – there are still those few communities without proper access to water and the government is working hard to connect such communities with access to water.

This democratic government has electrified over 90% of households. Today there is electricity even in the most rural of our villages. Electricity is no longer an exclusive reserve of those in the big cities.

This government continues to build houses for the poor.

This government has invested billions of resources in the education of our children.

The government has been hard at work, building new schools, laboratories and libraries.

Thousands of school children in this province and throughout the country attend our No-Fee schools. On top of this, the government provides free meals for children in poorer schools.

Programme Director;

We must always remember that in the exercise of our rights we must respect the rights of others.

In the recent past we have seen ugly episodes of total disregard of the human rights of others by some amongst us who still yearn for the return of the days of apartheid.

In this province we had a man who drove over another human being crippling his legs.

We also had a man shot to death by a farmer who claims that he mistook that human being to a wild-pig.

As if this is not enough, we had another human being shot at with the shooter claiming that he thought that human being was a monkey.

These are painful episodes that are calculated to undermine the human rights of our people; particularly black people.

What is even more saddening is the recent remarks by some leaders of some political parties who are now praising apartheid colonialism.

They are telling us that the same justice system that hanged Solomon Mahlangu and imprisoned Nelson Mandela for over 27 years on Robben Island should be celebrated as the beauty of colonialism.

This should not be accepted simply because it undermines the pain of our people.

It is for this reason that we should support the introduction of a legislation that will criminalise hate speech.

We cannot continue in a fashion where the victims of apartheid continue to be insulted and compared to animals without consequences.

Programme Director;

We cannot fully celebrate this day and enjoy the human rights in our constitution for as long as the scourge of Gender Based Violence remains.

Violence against women and children undermines our constitutionally entrenched rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to bodily integrity and the right against inhumane treatment.

We need to join hands in fighting against the abuse of women and children.

Women and children cannot remain slaves and chained while the rest of us are free.

Our freedom is not complete until women are freed from rape, abuse and all sorts of violence penetrated against them.

The fight against gender based violence is a fight for human rights. Let us fight together to defeat this monster.

Programme Director

In conclusion, I want to wish all the people of Limpopo well in your celebration of this day, I am confident that you will celebrate peacefully and responsibly, remembering that tomorrow is still a day.

I thank you!