

**ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR. CHUPU
MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATIONS, HELD AT MUTALE.**

21 MARCH 2016

Programme director,

Members of our provincial legislature,

Members of Executive Council,

Executive Mayors and Mayors of our Local Municipalities,

Khosi Vho Nethengwe, na mahosi othe,

The Acting Director General of the Province, Ntate Nchabeleng

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Ndi masiari, Thobela, Avuxeni!

The people of Limpopo have come to Mutale. The people of Limpopo have converged in this Phalama Sports Ground to celebrate an important day in our national calendar, the Human Rights Day.

We have come here to say no to racism; no to sexism; and, no to all forms of intolerance.

We have come here to say yes to unity in diversity; yes to equality; yes to social cohesion; yes to ubuntu; and indeed YES to human rights for all.

We have come to celebrate the rights that majority of us did not enjoy during the apartheid era.

Today all of us have a constitutionally guaranteed right to life, this means that no one, not even the government has a right to take people's lives.

Those who kill are arrested, prosecuted and sent to jail for a very long period of time.

Today we can all celebrate equality before the law. No one can legally be denied an opportunity merely because he is Black or White or maybe because he is Tsonga, Venda or Pedi.

This day is not an ordinary day for South Africans, in particular for the African majority who had to endure decades of systematic human rights abuses.

It is on this day that; we commemorate and remind ourselves about the sacrifices that accompanied the struggle for the attainment of our democracy and freedom.

We use this day, to remember and honour the memories of men and women who were senselessly massacred by apartheid police hit squads.

We remember the pain of those who lost their loved ones in places such as Sharpeville, Langa, Nyanga and many other Black townships around the country in 1960.

History tells us that on that day, apartheid police shot and killed 69 of the protesters. Majority of these innocent people were shot from the back while fleeing.

That's how evil the apartheid system was.

The events of Sharpeville were condemned by many people from across the world. These events exposed to the world the entrenched tradition of human rights abuses in South Africa at the time.

These irrational killings of our people by the apartheid government were part and parcel of the policy of the government of the day.

The apartheid government simply did not want to accept the fact that we are all made in the image of God.

The apartheid system was based illusions of White superiority and Black Inferiority.

It is for this reason that Black people had very limited rights during apartheid.

Today we are building a society based on equality before the law; no one has more rights than others. We are all equal.

Our democratic government has since declared March 21 Human Rights Day to commemorate and honour those who fought for our liberation and the rights we enjoy today.

We commemorate Human Rights Day to reinforce our commitment to the human rights as enshrined in our Constitution.

In 1994 we made a promise to ourselves and to the rest of the world that never again shall we allow a situation where people are discriminated upon merely because of the colour of their skin.

It is for this reason that we condemn all forms of racism and discrimination.

In the same spirit, we condemn tribalism, regionalism and ethnicity.

The message from our government is that we are one people, and we must embrace each other in the spirit of common brotherhood.

Those who discriminate must be isolated. We agree with the call from the ruling party that we must enact a law that will make racism a criminal offence.

We must do this because we know what racism did to this country. If we do not criminalise racism we will find ourselves where we were 22 years ago.

Programme Director;

Socio-economic rights are also part of human rights recognised by our constitution.

As you know, the Freedom Charter is pillared on the achievements of equal human rights for all.

The Freedom Charter calls for amongst other things; equality before the law, equal share in the country's wealth, opening of the doors of learning to all, work and security, and the provision of houses, security and comfort.

These are the real human rights.

These are the same rights that majority of our people have been denied by the evil system of apartheid.

Because of our experience and the experience of what we see in some parts of the world, we know that the respect for human rights is a necessary pre-condition for development, peace and tranquillity.

Programme director,

Today we have many reasons to celebrate. we are celebrating because we have a government that is based on the will of the people and we are all equal before the law.

Indeed today there is so much to celebrate.

There is indeed no doubt that our human rights dispensation has been coupled with the change in the quality of lives of many citizens.

We have one of the most progressive constitutions in the whole world. Our constitution is the ultimate protector of our Human rights.

The constitution guarantees us the many rights which we were denied under apartheid.

Programme Director;

Those who fought and died for our freedom and democracy, particularly the victims of Sharpeville, Langa and Nyanga massacres would today be happy of the South Africa we are building, and our human rights record.

As part of the efforts to enhance and advance the human rights of our people, the government has worked hard in the last 22 years to improve the lives of citizens of this country.

The government continues to work hard to deliver on socio-economic rights such as housing, water, education, social development and healthcare to all.

Today more people have access to safe drinking water than ever before placing us ahead of our 2015 Millennium Development Goal targets.

Our provision of electricity has ensured a better life for the majority of households with almost 90 per cent having access.

Millions of our people now have a place to call home because our caring government has invested billions of Rands in building new homes since 1994.

Government initiatives have ensured that more learners attend and succeed in school with the Matric pass rate substantially increasing over the past 22 years.

It is clear that our rights have and continue to work for us. However, we must also guard against the abuse of these rights. We must always remember that in the exercise of our rights we must respect the rights of others.

We must not when we want houses burn schools. We must not when we want roads burn clinics and other government buildings.

By doing this we interfere and violate the human rights of others to receive services from government.

We must respect these rights because people fought and died for these rights.

Programme director,

We accept that although much has been achieved, much more can still be done.

We know that there are still some of our people who are still living in conditions of poverty and unemployment.

It is for this reason that this year and going forward, we are dedicating most of our energy and resources in efforts that are aimed at creating jobs and fighting poverty.

Part of these efforts is to invest more resources in the education and training of our young people.

We believe that young people must be skilled in such a manner that enables them to be creators of jobs and not just job hunters.

Through the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism and the Department of Agriculture, we have set aside some resources to assist youth cooperatives in the province.

We also have business support infrastructure available to our youth through our Limpopo Economic Development Agency.

We urge young people to seek relevant information and to use such information for their socio-economic development.

On the education side, our government continues to offer financial support to underprivileged youth to further studies at institution of higher learning.

This year we have directed about R10 million in bursaries to the first intake of medical students at the University of Limpopo.

Each year we continue to send hundreds of young people for medical studies in Cuba. This is a very successful project.

The government will also continue to offer necessary support to the youth in the creative and entertainment industry to help them realise their full potential.

I announced in February during the State of the Province Address that the government will be constructing a theatre in the province to support our young people in the art and entertainment industry.

The challenge for you is to stand up and seize these opportunities that came with our freedom and democracy.

Programme Director;

In conclusion, I want to say that we are definitely on course to build a society that we can all be proud to be part of.

The building of such a society is not a simple task. It is a complicated task because we are building from the rubbles of apartheid policies of segregation and discrimination.

Our immediate task is to denounce and refuse to be part of those things that would make it impossible to build this society that we all would love to live in.

Part of those things includes racism. We have seen in the recent past people attacking each other merely because of their membership of a particular race or language.

President Nelson Mandela taught us that we are one single rainbow nation.

Just as we must hate and isolate racism; we must also do the same with tribalism and regionalism.

No one in this province should ever be made to feel small or inadequate simply because he speaks a different language or because he comes from a particular region.

We are one people and nothing should divide us.

Lastly, 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!

Ro livhuwa nga maanda, ndaa!