

TRIBUTE BY PREMIER DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE  
FUNERAL OF STAFF SERGEANT SHWAHLANE THEOPHILUS SEEPE  
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE (SANDF),  
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

22 FEBRUARY 2025

The Seepe Family,  
Honourable Mayor,  
Traditional Leaders,  
Mourners,

Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goie more.

This morning, we gather here, our hearts burdened with sorrow, our spirits heavy with grief. The weight of loss is immense, for we stand before the final resting place of a soldier, a patriot, a hero, Staff Sergeant Shwahlane Theophilus Seepe.

In the call of duty, he journeyed beyond the borders of our land, carrying not a weapon of destruction but a shield of peace. He stood where the world's wounds run deep, where conflict rages, and he gave his all in the service of humanity.

Today, we bid farewell not only to a son of the soil but to a beacon of bravery and a guardian of peace.

Staff Sergeant Seepe was part of the SANDF contingent deployed as part of both the South African Development Community Mission in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).

In the face of adversity, amidst the perils of war, he displayed extraordinary courage and dedication. When the M23 rebels launched a brutal attack on their base in sake, he stood firm, undaunted, unwavering, and unrelenting in his commitment to the cause of peace.

His bravery is etched into the annals of history, alongside the names of countless men and women who have laid down their lives so others may live in peace.

His love for his country was unparalleled. At just 41 years old, we know that his story was far from finished. As a province, we had anticipated his continued contributions in shaping the future of our armed forces. His untimely departure has robbed us of a great soldier, a great leader, and an example to many young South Africans who aspire to serve with honor and integrity.

The reality of life, as we know it, dictates that 41 is far too young an age to leave this world. We often say that reaching 74 is a full life, and anything beyond that is a blessing. But today, we mourn a life cut short, a sacrifice made too soon.

To our young people, let the legacy of Staff Sergeant Seepe be a guiding light. His choice to dedicate his life to the defence of our sovereignty is a call to all who dream of a nation safe, secure, and free. He could have chosen a different career, one that would have kept him away from danger.

But he chose the path of service, one that placed him in harm's way, not for personal gain but for the greater good. To the Seepe family, we extend our deepest gratitude for allowing your son, brother, and father to serve. We know that his passion was to defend his country, and in doing so, he made the ultimate sacrifice.

As a country, we are currently facing many challenges, including international scrutiny for our unwavering support of Palestinian sovereignty. We are seeing increased economic pressure, including the withdrawal of some foreign aid and investments. But let us remain resolute.

Let us continue in the spirit of Staff Sergeant Seepe, undaunted by external pressures and committed to the cause of justice and peace. His sacrifice is a reminder that peace is not merely a dream but a goal worth every effort, even at the highest cost.

As we lay our soldiers to rest, let us remember that our duty as a province and as a people does not end here. We must strive to build a society that embodies the values for which he fought, a nation that is just, peaceful, and united. Let us not only celebrate his service but also honor it by committing to uplift our province.

We must remain ambassadors of our land, speaking positively of our province and working together to resolve our challenges. Where things are not working, let us collaborate to find solutions rather than tearing each other down.

Indeed, we acknowledge the many challenges our province faces, water shortages, high unemployment rates, and deteriorating road infrastructure.

But rest assured, as government, these remain at the top of our agenda. The recent heavy rains and floods have set back our efforts, particularly our Dikgerekgere Wednesday programme, which was introduced to improve road conditions in rural communities. However, this setback will not deter us.

Our Public Works teams are working tirelessly to repair damaged roads because we understand that economic growth and development rely heavily on proper infrastructure.

We are also intensifying our efforts to ensure access to clean water for every household. We know that when water is scarce, the burden falls heaviest on women, who must travel long distances to fetch it. But we also need your support in this fight.

Illegal water connections continue to hinder service delivery, diverting resources meant for entire communities into the hands of a few. We call upon all community members to report such acts so that those responsible can be held accountable.

We further urge the private sector to join hands with us in tackling youth unemployment. We encourage our young people to seize opportunities in entrepreneurship, supported by government initiatives through the Department of Trade and Industry. The potential of our youth must be harnessed so that we can transform our province into a thriving economic hub.

In the same breath, we must stand together to fight the scourge of gender-based violence, femicide, and the kidnapping of women and children. Every day, we wake up to tragic stories of abuse, mutilation, and senseless killings. We can no longer remain silent.

Let us report these crimes, let us support survivors, and let us work towards a society that values the safety and dignity of all. Staff Sergeant Seepe stood for peace and justice. In his honor, let us ensure that his fight was not in vain.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable soldier, let us take comfort in knowing that his legacy will live on in the values he upheld. To the Seepe family, we offer not just our condolences but our profound gratitude. You have lost a son, but South Africa has gained a hero whose name will forever be inscribed in the history of our nation's struggle for peace and security.

May the soul of Staff Sergeant Shwahlane Theophilus Seepe rest in eternal peace. His courage, dedication, and patriotism will never be forgotten.

I thank you.