



**Ministry Justice and Correctional Services
Republic of South Africa**

**Media Statement
For Immediate Release
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Minister Lamola conveys condolences to the Bizos Family

The Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Ronald Lamola, conveys his heartfelt condolences and that of the Ministry to the Bizos family and the entire legal profession following the death of Advocate George Bizos earlier this afternoon.

Advocate Bizos was a legal giant. Born in 1928 in Kirani, Greece, he was 13 when he arrived in South Africa as a refugee with his father. In 1950 he completed his law degree at the University of the Witwatersrand and held BA and LLB degrees along with three LLD (Honoris Causa) degrees.

In 1954 he was admitted to the Johannesburg Bar and he practiced as an advocate until 1990. From 1991 he served as counsel at the Legal Resources Centre's Constitutional Litigation Unit and he was made an Honorary Life Member of the Johannesburg Bar in 2004.

During the apartheid years Adv Bizos dedicated his life to fighting for human rights, freedom and democracy. After the dawn of democracy, he continued his efforts to ensure that all South Africans equally enjoy those rights enshrined and guaranteed by our Constitution.

In his legal career he has represented many political activists in high-profile trials. He was a member of the ANC defence team in the Rivonia trial where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and others faced the death penalty. In addition, he acted as counsel in numerous political trials, such as that of Bram Fischer and the inquests of Steve Biko, Ahmed Timol and Neil Agget.

He also represented the families of stalwarts of the liberation struggle at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as the leader of the team to oppose applications for amnesty on behalf of the Biko, Hani, Goniwe, Calata, Mkonto, Mhlauli, Slovo and Schoon families.

He gained prominence through thorough arguments in cases which were driven by the apartheid regime in its quest to derail the freedom struggles of our people. These cases thrust him in the public eye and also made him an enemy of the apartheid regime.

Not many legal practitioners confronted the injustices faced by political activists more than Bizos and his work will continue to inspire a generation of upcoming practitioners. We are grateful for the lasting legacy he has left.

He was the recipient of many prestigious awards, such as the Order For Meritorious Service Class II Medal awarded to him by President Nelson Mandela in 1999 and the Bernard Simon Memorial Award from the International Bar Association in October 2004, the Sydney & Lady Kentridge Award and the Duma Nokwe Human Rights and Democracy Award 2004.

He played a monumental role in the drafting of South Africa's Constitution, as a key member of the ANC's Legal and Constitutional Committee, as advisor to the Negotiating Teams at Codesa and in shaping the Constitution and specifically the Bill of Rights.

Minister Lamola lauded Bizos was an erudite advocate whose record in the profession was impeccable. He devoted his phenomenal intellect and legal prowess as an advocate to the marginalized.

"We commiserate with his family, loved ones, colleagues and all who knew him. The outpouring of grief in the legal profession and throughout the country bears testimony to the noble role that Adv Bizos played."

In April 2016, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Adv Bizos left the audience with a challenge when he said:

'The challenge is this: I want you to think of one way in which you can advance the values of our Constitution in your community. Keep track of it; record your progress; and whenever you believe you have achieved what you set out to do, challenge yourself to do something more. Do that in the name of our Constitution and the aims and values that underpin it, and be unrelenting in your pursuit of this.'

"This is a promise that we will keep as we advance the values of the Constitution. Adv Bizos was a selfless servant of the legal profession and we owe a great gratitude to him."

We are free because of him and so many others like him,” said Minister Lamola.

Enquiries

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