
South African Anti-Apartheid Leader Ahmed Kathrada Dies

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Ahmed Kathrada was sentenced to life imprisonment along with the Nelson Mandela; served 26 years and three months.

Ahmed "Uncle Kathy" Kathrada was hospitalised in Johannesburg earlier this month after surgery to relieve blood clotting in the brain. Earlier today, his foundation confirmed that the former colleague of late South African President Nelson Mandela had succumbed to post-surgical complications at the Donald Gordon Hospital in Johannesburg.

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Kathrada, who was a lifelong supporter of the African National Congress (ANC), Palestine and all things liberation-related, was sentenced to life imprisonment along with the Mandela. He was imprisoned for 26 years and three months – 18 of which were on the infamous Robben Island. He was then moved to Pollsmoor prison in 1982 before being released from jail on Oct. 15, 1989, at the age of 60.

The activist-turned-politician later served as parliamentary counselor in Mandela's first administration. "We are deeply saddened to learn this morning of the passing on of our dear friend and founding trustee, Ahmed Kathrada," wrote the Nelson Mandela Foundation on Twitter. "Hamba Kahle [farewell] Kathy."

Kathrada had dedicated his life to fighting the racial injustice of white-minority rule in South Africa. He was also one of the most senior ANC leaders to criticize President Jacob Zuma's presidency regarding allegations of government corruption and maladministration. "This is great loss to the ANC, the broader liberation movement and South Africa as a whole. Internationally, he was staunch in his support for the Palestinian struggle. "Kathy" was an inspiration to millions in different parts of the world," Neeshan Balton director of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation said.

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Tourism minister and activist Derek Hanekom added that the passing of the "revolutionary mentor and dear friend" was a great loss. "Comrade Kathy was a gentle, humane and humble soul. He was a determined revolutionary, who gave his entire life to the liberation struggle in our country," Hanekom shared.

Former Archbishop of Cape Town Reverend Desmond Tutu said in a short statement published on Facebook: "May Ahmed rest in peace and rise in glory. May he rejoice in many heavenly cups of hot chocolate with his old friends and comrades, Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, Motsoaledi and Mahlaba, among them."

Kathrada was born to immigrant Indian parents in the Schweizer-Reneke province of South Africa, just before the Great Depression, in 1929. He became involved in politics at the tender age of 12 when he distributed leaflets for the Young Communist League of South Africa.

He was married to fellow anti-apartheid activist Barbara Hogan, who served 10 years in jail for high treason against the apartheid government.