

Zuma saddened by former Chief Justice, Chaskalson death

President Jacob Zuma has learned with great sadness of the passing away of former President of the Constitutional Court and former Chief Justice, Arthur Chaskalson.



(Image: GCIS)

The first President of the Constitutional Court after the dawn of democracy passed away on Saturday.

"On behalf of all South Africans, we reach out to his wife and family as we salute a life inseparable from South Africa's march to freedom

"We wish the Chaskalson family strength during this difficult time. Our thoughts are with them," he said.

President Zuma said Chaskalson's life embraced a courageous role in the fight against apartheid, in the negotiated transition and the shaping of the constitutional democracy as well as in the building of the post-apartheid society based on reconciliation, reconstruction and a South African nationhood.

As the first President of the Constitutional Court, he leaves a special imprint on the building of a united, non-racial, non-sexist constitutional democracy.

Former President Nelson Mandela appointed him in 1994 as the first President of the Constitutional Court and between 2001 and 2005 he served as South Africa's Chief Justice.

Chaskalson was part of Mandela's defence team from the Rivonia Trial for sabotage in which he and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment.

He and his colleagues persuaded Advocate Bram Fischer to lead the defence and together they grappled with the

possibility that the accused might be sentenced to death.

Throughout his life, Chaskalson worked on the legal defence of opponents of apartheid and in 1978 helped to establish the Legal Resources Centre of which Mandela once said: "this remarkable institution perhaps did more than any other in the 1970's and 1980's to challenge executive abuses, and to be a legal voice for the voiceless."

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