

## SANEF honours Madiba as champion of the free media

On Saturday, 28 May 2011, the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) presented a special award, Friend of the Media, to former president Nelson Mandela in acknowledgement of his legendary efforts - both in and outside the office - to support a free and independent media.



L-R: Ahmed Dangor, Nelson Mandela Foundation CEO and Mondli Makhanya, SANEF chairperson. Pic: Simone Puterman, Bizcommunity.

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The award was received on Mandela's behalf by Ahmed Dangor, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation at the SANEF Council meeting in Johannesburg, who pointed out that Madiba had said that a free and investigative media is essential for democracy, and that the Nelson Mandela Foundation is busy compiling a book on Madiba's quotes and views on a free media.

Below is the full wording of the award:

*“ Every nation at some point produces someone who shapes and moulds it. Someone who exudes the qualities of being a little more than the rest of us. Tata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is such a special person. Tata Madiba spent years fighting a system that dehumanised an entire nation. For this he was arrested and sent to jail - incarcerated for 27 years.*



L-R: Mary Papayya, SANEF deputy chairperson; Ahmed Dangor, Nelson Mandela Foundation CEO; Mondli Makhanya, SANEF chairperson; Ferida Mehtar, SANEF executive director; and Juanita Williams, SANEF treasurer. Pic: James Oatway, Sunday Times.

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*When the struggle of our people and of the world, forced the regime to release him, Tata keenly realized that part of the reason why the people succeeded, and why he had become the idol and icon of a world hungry for true leadership, was because of the role the media played in recording history and pursuing the truth without fear or favour. While his release and eventual elevation to the highest office in our land was universally cheered, we as the South African media, carried the responsibility to not become sycophantic cheer leaders of the hero, but as always, watchdogs over him, his party and the government he led.*



Wording of the SANEF  
Friend of the Media Award to  
Nelson Mandela.

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*In doing this, we sometimes earned his wrath. He nevertheless opened his office for structured interaction, in particular with members of SANEF. Thus, we had regular meetings with him to discuss our issues, but also to allow him to raise his own with us. The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the ministers of Police, Justice and the NPA with SANEF, which is crucial for the media in dealing with subpoena-happy prosecutors, is a legacy bequeathed to us by Tata. It is not perfect, but it serves a vital purpose. Today we have meetings with incumbent presidents that followed him. It is due in large part to the example he set. The Editors and Senior Editorial Executives of this country, representing Print, Broadcast and Digital media, wish to collectively express our deepest appreciation for a lifetime's commitment to freedom in its broadest form, but also a commitment that ensured that media freedom in particular is appreciated and defended in this, our land, and beyond. Tata Madiba, we honour you as a champion of the free media. ”*

The venues and catering for the SANEF Council meeting and dinner were sponsored by ACSA.

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