

# Madiba shirts all the rage

Former president Nelson Mandela's signature shirts have been flying off the shelves since he was hospitalised.

Sonwabile Ndamase, the creator of the famous Madiba shirt, said he has been inundated by companies wanting to buy the shirts to commemorate Mandela's birthday next month.

The Presidency announced on Sunday that Mandela's condition had "become critical".

He is suffering from a recurring respiratory infection and has been at the Mediclinic Heart Hospital in Pretoria since 8 June.

Mandela has been hospitalised four times since December, causing anxiety worldwide.

"Sales of the Madiba shirt have shot up since he was hospitalised," said Ndamase.

"Just now I heard about Americans who came to buy about 12 Madiba shirts.

"A number of companies are buying the Madiba shirt in preparation for his birthday. They want their staff dressed in the shirts.

"We are having a lot of inquiries, some people are taking anything that symbolises the man. I guess that is another way for them to empathise with the situation."

Ndamase said the shirts cost R850 each.

The colourful shirts grabbed Madiba's fancy from the moment he saw them and he routinely wore them at major events, bringing Ndamase international renown.

Ndamase said: "My interaction with uTata has been a very daunting one and exciting because, through him, I have managed to travel the world and travel with him as part of his entourage.

"His legacy endorsed my dream of making it a point that fashion in this country moves beyond mere glitz and glamour."

Mandela's words when he received the shirt still echo in Ndamase's ears - "A Pondo who designs clothes? Let me see what you have designed for me?"

"All I really wanted to do was honour and thank this great man for his magnanimous bravery by giving him his own style as a way of saying 'thank you' for what he had done for all of us," Ndamase said.

He said his church planned to link up with Mandela's family to pray for the ailing statesman.

Source: The Times

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