

President Zuma officially unveils the C-Max Gallows as a memorial museum

His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma, officially unveiled the C-Max Gallows at the Pretoria Management Area as a memorial site to coin and treasure the threads of apartheid struggle icons who paid the ultimate prize for freedom enjoyed by their children and families today. This historic event attended by a host of cabinet ministers and families of the 134 victims of the gallows took place on 15 December 2011, a day after a cleansing ceremony was performed at the gallows.

More than 4 000 people including the 134 political prisoners were hanged by the apartheid government at the gallows. Before unveiling the monument, President Zuma also took a walk up the 52 stairs the struggle heroes walked on their way to the execution chamber where they were hanged. Family members of the victims were also afforded an opportunity to walk the stairs.

In his address, President Zuma said the gallows memorial must be a symbol of hope for the future. "We open the museum as a place of healing so that future generations can learn what wrong can happen if we lose our human dignity. All 134 names (of political prisoners) are officially enshrined (in the monument) for eternity," he said. The president had earlier sung *Senzeni Na*, a song sung by many of the political prisoners on death row. He was joined in the singing by the large crowd comprising Correctional Services Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, struggle hero Chris Hani's widow Limpho, former Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Judge George Bizos, several Ministers, Premiers, MECs, political party leaders, Kings and Chiefs and family members of liberation struggle heroes hanged at the gallows by the apartheid government.

President Zuma also took time to console the family members. "We are with you emotionally and otherwise. Government will, without fail, find each family and look at their difficulties. "May their (political prisoners') spirits now rest in peace for you have walked the steps they walked for the liberation of people of South Africa," said President Zuma. He was referring to the ceremony which saw the families taking a tour of the gallows and then making their way to the grave sites the previous day. Similarly to Robben Island, Nelson Mandela Museum and the Apartheid Museum, the gallows will be "forever embedded in our history. The memorial will give a true account of where we come from as a people," President Zuma said.

This will ensure that South Africa never goes through a "similar horror" again. "I don't think there is any justice in killing another person," the president said, to thunderous applause. He praised Correctional Services employees who were prison warders during the executions, for coming forward to help with information about the gallows.

"They are the only ones who know what happened in the apartheid room." Zuma commended South African judges for abolishing the death penalty. He said: "It shows that the state does not need to kill people to prove that committing a crime is wrong. We can be equally tough without giving the state licence to kill."

Parliament and political parties pledged their support to the memorial. Family members of executed political prisoners were also presented with engraved framed photographs of their loved ones and plaques bearing a message from Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula.