

Mandela's Death Stirs Sense Of Loss Around The World

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SOWETO, South Africa — The mood was more festive than funereal. Outside Nelson Mandela's former home in Soweto on Friday, crowds sang, chanted and danced. People carried posters emblazoned with his famous quotations. Children ran through the streets holding up pictures of the former president's face torn from the morning's newspapers.

"We love you, Papa Mandela," they cried.

Eunice Ngakane, 40, from North West Province, said she and her friends were going to spend the whole night on Vilakazi Street, remembering the national hero who had died the night before. Then they would "freshen up" in the morning and come right back again.

"When Africa cries, Africa sings," said Japie Molatedi, 55, who described himself as a "typical Sowetan."

Samantha Nkabinde, 28, a financial analyst in Johannesburg, said it was only fitting for the mourning to take place in such a public fashion. "He never sat behind closed doors or walls," she said. "He went out among the people, touched so many people."

The crowd sang, "Mandela, you're my president."

In the government's first announcement of a schedule for ceremonies that are likely to draw vast numbers of world dignitaries and less exalted mourners, President Jacob Zuma said Friday that Mr. Mandela's body would lie in state from Wednesday to Friday after a memorial at a huge World Cup soccer stadium in Soweto on Tuesday. He will be buried in his childhood village, Qunu, in the Eastern Cape region, on Dec. 15, Mr. Zuma said.

The White House said that President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, would visit South Africa next week "to participate in memorial events."

As flags flew at half-staff across South Africa, words of loss, blended with memories of inspiration, were offered by Mr. Obama in Washington, members of the British royal family and many who saw Mr. Mandela as an exemplar of a broader struggle.

“A giant among men has passed away,” Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India said. “This is as much India’s loss as South Africa’s.”

As public figures reached for superlatives to describe Mr. Mandela, Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain declared in London, “A great light has gone out in the world.” Pope Francis praised “the steadfast commitment shown by Nelson Mandela in promoting the human dignity of all the nation’s citizens.” President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said Mr. Mandela was “committed to the end of his days to the ideals of humanism and justice.”

Speaking in Cape Town, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, himself a towering figure in the struggle against apartheid, asked rhetorically whether Mr. Mandela was “the exception to prove the rule.”

“I say no, emphatically,” he said, adding that Mr. Mandela “embodied our hopes and dreams, symbolized our enormous potential.”

Helen Zille, the leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance, said that South Africans owed their sense of belonging to a single family to Mr. Mandela. “That is his legacy,” she said. “It is why there is an unparalleled outpouring of national grief at his passing.”

The tone of the tributes reflected broad sentiments crossing racial, national, religious and political lines. In the United States, Republicans and Democrats alike rushed to embrace his legacy. In China, the government hailed him as a liberator from imperialism, even as dissidents embraced him as a symbol of resistance against repression.

In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad, accused by the political opposition of heinous crimes in a nearly three-year-old civil war, said Mr. Mandela was “an inspiration in the values of love and human brotherhood.”

In South Africa, people of all races gathered at Mr. Mandela’s home, laying wreaths, singing freedom songs, whispering prayers and performing the shuffling toyi-toyi dance in his honor. People came together in a way that seems increasingly rare in a nation confronting the everyday worries of a struggling economy, incessant allegations of government corruption and a sinking sense that a nation born two decades ago into such promise is slipping into despair.

“It is one of those days when everyone is united again,” said Reginald Hoskins, who brought his two young children to Mr. Mandela’s house on Friday morning. “That is what Nelson Mandela stood for, and we need to honor that in our lives every day.”

For those who knew him best, the knowledge that he has gone slowly seeped in.

“I never thought, knowing him for close to 40 years, that I would ever speak of him in the past tense,” said Tokyo Sexwale, a senior member of the African National

Congress who served prison time on Robben Island alongside Mr. Mandela. “The passing of an icon like Nelson Mandela signifies the end of an era.”

The tumult of tributes to Mr. Mandela reflected his ability to forge bonds around the world, and how many leaders and public figures sought him out.

“His passion for freedom and justice created new hope for generations of oppressed people worldwide,” said former President Jimmy Carter.

Musicians, clerics and sports figures joined those offering accolades after Mr. Mandela’s death was announced late Thursday, with a leading South African cricketer, A. B. de Villiers, echoing Archbishop Tutu’s hope for a future free of renewed racial and social division.

“Let us now, more than ever, stick together as a nation,” Mr. de Villiers said. “We owe him that much.”

Mr. Mandela was closely linked with sports, both as a boxer in his youth and, after becoming South Africa’s first black president, as a supporter of the national Springbok rugby team — once a symbol of white exclusivism — which triumphed in the 1995 World Cup.

“He taught us forgiveness on a grand scale,” Muhammad Ali said in a statement. “His was a spirit born free, destined to soar above the rainbows. Today his spirit is soaring through the heavens. He is now forever free.”

In the Middle East, Israeli and Palestinian leaders alike offered tributes to a man who had been a staunch supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization, but who had also recognized what he called “the legitimacy of Zionism as a Jewish nationalism.”

On Friday, Marwan Barghouti, a Palestinian leader imprisoned since 2002, declared in a statement: “From within my prison cell, I tell you our freedom seems possible because you reached yours,” according to a translation released by the P.L.O. At the same time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel called Mr. Mandela “a paragon of our time” and a “moral leader of the first order.”

When Cliff Rosen, an urban farmer in Johannesburg, awoke Friday to the news that Mr. Mandela had died, he went out to the sunflowers growing in his garden and cut down the tallest one.

“A special flower for a special man,” said Mr. Rosen, 40, as he wired the towering, six-foot stalk to the fence surrounding the spontaneous memorial that has sprung up just outside the home where Mr. Mandela died.

“I chose this flower because he towered over us all,” Mr. Rosen said. “Today it feels like the world got a little bit smaller.”

Nicholas Kulish reported from Soweto, Lydia Polgreen from Johannesburg and Alan Cowell from London. Jodi Rudoren contributed reporting from Jerusalem, Rick Gladstone from New York and Michael D. Shear from Washington.