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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **FAKE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER MARS MANDELA MEMORIAL SERVICE**

The unashamedly fake Sign Language Interpreter marred the moving tributes from world leaders who gathered at FNB Stadium on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013 to pay their last respect to our iconic Nelson Mandela. The charlatan has infuriated the Deaf community in South Africa and the world and brought into huge disservice of the Sign Language Interpreter profession.

This incidence has highlighted the poignant reality of the situation of Deaf people and the chasm between policy and practices in South Africa. The laissez-faire attitude towards Sign Language interpreting as a profession and the lack development of South African Sign Language in general is a manifestation of policy neglect and government dithering. It cannot be that just anyone with basic knowledge of the alphabet or an enterprising charlatan like the fake one can become a Sign Language Interpreter overnight without proper accreditation procedures befitting any profession. At present, Deaf people, as users of service, have no recourse to reporting complaints they may experience with Sign Language Interpreters in general and the profession in particular.

The unfortunate incident has exposed the glaring need for a regulatory mechanism to be put in place to regulate the accreditation process of the profession. Nelson Mandela bequeathed us with firm and empowering fundamental values of human rights, human dignity and human justice. We need to tirelessly fight for, promote and safeguard these values. Let this be the fitting apology to Deaf people and a lasting tribute to Nelson Mandela and the country for this embarrassment of international proportions. This demands a firm and exemplary action from our government to meaningfully respond with a strictly regulated formal structure to govern mentoring and skills transfer of this profession.

The buck stops with the internal procurement and supply chain of the relevant government department tasked with the acquisition of these services. We are rightly and hugely disappointed by the failure of the procurement system to ensure a competitive process for a skilled and highest quality possible Sign Language Interpreting befitting the occasion. We are reluctant to draw conclusions and view this as a manifestation of the extent of the rot and rent-seeking that plagues our society.

The organisers should apologise to the Deaf community and the people of South Africa. In the normal circumstance, we would call for such charlatans to be charged and prosecuted for impersonation and violating the heritage of Deaf people and for causing to offence to the Deaf community.

**Issued jointly by:**

**Disabled People South Africa (DPSA)  
and  
South African National Deaf Association (SANDA)**

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ENDS.

