

International

South Africa's 'moral compass' Tutu feted on his 90th birthday

Tutu lauded 'as a fighter for equality and social justice'

CAPE TOWN: Desmond Tutu, South Africa's anti-apartheid icon, Nobel peace laureate and a man dubbed the "moral compass of the nation," marked his 90th birthday yesterday with a rare public appearance. The jovial Tutu, who even today speaks out against injustice, attended a special thanksgiving service at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, where he was appointed South Africa's first black Anglican archbishop.

The service opened with a rendition of "Happy Birthday." Tutu, wearing his trademark purple shirt and white collar, under a black suit, waved in acknowledgement, from a wheelchair.

He sat next to his wife Leah. Tributes and well-wishes for the revered anti-apartheid icon have poured in from presidents, individuals and organizations from around the globe. President Cyril Ramaphosa lauded Tutu "as a fighter in the cause for human rights, for equality and for social justice" throughout the 59 years since his ordination.

He paid tribute to "The Arch," as he is fondly called in South Africa, "for a life that has been well-lived in honesty, integrity, fearlessness and service to humanity."

US President Joe Biden said he was "inspired by his personal commitment to championing human rights and to always speaking out for what is right." "The world first came to know Archbishop Tutu as he modeled the highest tenets of his faith in challenging the injustice of apartheid in South Africa," said Biden in a statement. "And in the years since, the world has continued to learn from Archbishop Tutu's message of justice, equality, and reconciliation."



CAPE TOWN, South Africa: Archbishop Emeritus and Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu, attends a service at St George's Cathedral to celebrate his 90th birthday in Cape Town, yesterday. —AFP

'Voice of conscience'

A tireless activist, Tutu has in recent years slammed even the ruling African National Congress (ANC) — the vanguard of the fight against white-minority rule-for cronyism and nepotism after apartheid ended in 1994. In the past, he has confronted homophobia in the Anglican Church, challenged Nelson Mandela over

generous salaries for cabinet ministers and stridently criticized the corruption that mushroomed under ex-president Jacob Zuma. "At times when we have found ourselves losing our way, you have taken us well to task," said Ramaphosa.

"For nearly three decades, yours has been a voice of conscience, guiding us and motivating us to do better by our people," he said. Ordained at the age of 30 and appointed archbishop in 1986, Tutu lobbied for international sanctions against apartheid, and later for human rights on a global scale.

He turned his focus on the thorny issue of reconciliation in the post-apartheid era as head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He retired in 2010 and rarely appears or speaks in public now. He was last seen in public in May, when he and his wife got their COVID-19 vaccinations. Tutu was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997 and has undergone repeated treatment.

Leading figures

After the service, the archbishop emeritus and his wife Leah will spend the day at home with daughters Naomi and Mpho, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The day will culminate with on-line speeches from the Dalai Lama, former UN rights chief Mary Robinson, Mandela's widow and campaigner Graca Machel, and South Africa's ex-ombudswoman Thuli Madonsela, who is widely respected for her exposure of corruption. The line-up of speakers is a reminder of Tutu's values, surrounding himself with rights advocates at a time when South Africa's current leaders are better known for lavish lifestyles and billion-dollar bank accounts. —AFP

Merkel meets pope, Draghi in farewell visit to Rome

VATICAN CITY, Holy See: German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed climate change and clerical abuse with Pope Francis yesterday in a farewell trip to Rome that included talks with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. Merkel, who is bowing out after 16 years in power, also visited St Peter's Basilica and will lunch at a restaurant in central Rome before giving a speech at a peace conference at the Colosseum. She was honored with a ceremonial welcome by the Swiss Guards at the Vatican before meeting and exchanging gifts with the pope, whom she has met several times before.

She said afterwards they discussed climate change—an issue on which Francis has been outspoken—and the sexual abuse by children of clergy, a problem that has rocked the Catholic Church in Germany and elsewhere. "We had important discussions about child abuse," Merkel, the daughter of a Lutheran clergyman, told reporters.

"I wanted to underline with my visit that we think that the truth must come to light, and the topic must be dealt with." Earlier, Merkel visited the site of a new institute within the Vatican's Gregoriana university dedicated to child protection and met with Hans Zollner, the Vatican's leading expert on measures to safeguard minors. She was later due to meet with Draghi, with whom she has worked closely for years, notably when he was head of the European Central Bank—and where they did not always see eye-to-eye. — AFP

Ex-Nazi guard, 100, refuses to discuss atrocities at trial

BRANDENBURG: A 100-year-old former concentration camp guard who became the oldest person to be tried for Nazi-era crimes in Germany will not speak about his time at the site, his lawyer said at the trial opening yesterday. Josef Schuetz is accused of "knowingly and willingly" assisting in the murder of 3,518 prisoners at the Sachsenhausen camp in Oranienburg, north of Berlin, between 1942 and 1945.

Allegations include aiding and abetting the "execution by firing squad of Soviet prisoners of war in 1942" and the murder of prisoners "using the poisonous gas Zyklon B". However, Schuetz "will not speak, but will only provide information about his personal situation" at the trial, his lawyer Stefan Waterkamp, told the court.

Antoine Grumbach, 79, whose father was killed at the camp, said he wanted the accused to acknowledge "the possibility of guilt". Thomas Walther, a lawyer representing several camp survivors and victims' relatives, said he hoped Schuetz would change his mind.

'Not made of stone'

"A man is not made of stone, not a machine," he said. "Maybe he will still say something." Despite his advanced age, a medical assessment in August found Schuetz fit to stand trial, although his hearings are limited to a couple of hours a day. Schuetz arrived with a walking aid for the proceedings, held in a sports hall given the huge interest in the case. The bespectacled man



BRANDENBURG: Defendant Josef Schuetz gets help from his lawyer Stefan Waterkamp (left) to hide his face behind a folder as he arrives for his trial in Brandenburg an der Havel yesterday. —AFP

answered the judge with a clear voice when asked about his name, age and home address.

A widower since 1986, he was visibly proud when he replied that he will "celebrate (his) 101st birthday, on November 16". More than seven decades after World War II, German prosecutors are racing to bring the last surviving Nazi perpetrators to justice, and have in recent years increasingly focused attention on lower-ranking staff. The case comes a week after a 96-year-old German woman, who was a secretary in a Nazi death camp, dramatically fled before the start of her trial, but was caught several hours later. She, too, has been charged with complicity in murder. Her trial resumes on October 19. — AFP