

## **"Liliesleaf Receives National Heritage Status**

**11 July 2011**

Johannesburg – Liliesleaf, a secret meeting place for senior leaders of the ANC , Congress Alliance and the headquarters of the High Command of MK, the military wing of the ANC, was declared a national heritage site. The announcement was made by Arts and Culture Minister Paul Mashatile at the Rivonia Trialists Gala Awards dinner which was held at the Sandton Convention Centre on 11 July 2011. The Gala Awards Dinner was in honour of the Rivonia 12 and their families. The awards were hosted by Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association and the Office of the Presidency.

During his key note address, President Jacob Zuma portrayed the 12 Rivonia as the best freedom fighters to have been produced by the liberation struggle. "This was a generation of seasoned and hardened fighters and revolutionaries. They had been part of some of the most memorable and historic events of their time."

President Zuma has called on South Africans to ensure that the story of Liliesleaf Farm, where a group of political activists were arrested in 1963, is told in full for the benefit of current and future generations. Zuma said the raid on Liliesleaf and the subsequent arrests were one of the important milestones in the country's liberation struggle, adding that government regarded the farm as important part of the liberation history. He added that the events that followed the trial made South Africa what it is today and that these were leaders of a special quality... these were great thinkers... the Rivonia trial changed the landscape of political struggle.

11 July marked the 48th anniversary of the 1963 arrests at the farm, which led to eight of the 10 accused - including former President Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Andrew Mlangeni and Ahmed Kathrada - being sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage. Mandela at the time of the raid was already serving a five year sentence, for leaving the country illegally and was brought to the Rivonia Trial as accused number 1, following the uncovering of his diary and other papers during the raid on Liliesleaf.

At the awards, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Mandela, Rusty Bernstein, Ahmed Kathrada, Dennis Goldberg, James Kantor, Andrew Mlangeni, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe were honoured. Exhibitions of these heroes were on display during the awards ceremony.

Zuma said the Department of Arts and Culture had decided to declare Liliesleaf a National Heritage Site to make sure that the heritage contained in the farm was properly preserved. The recognition means that the farm will receive a financial boost from the government to continue with developments and to ensure that it has adequate resources to maintain its place in our history."