

On the occasion of the annual Remembrance Day commemoration of the fallen heroes
09 November 2008

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the annual Remembrance Day commemoration of the fallen heroes, Cenotaph, Harisson street - Johannesburg

Theme for 2008: "The City of Johannesburg Honours all those who made the Supreme Sacrifice in All Wars, Battles and Armed Struggle for Freedom Democracy and Peace in South Africa".

Speaker of Council: Clr Nkele Ntingane

Chief Whip of Council: Clr Bafana Sithole

MMC for Community Development: Clr Nandi Mayathula-Khoza

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mr Mavela Dlamini

Chairperson of the Commission on Religious, Cultural and Linguistic Rights: Rev. Dr. Mongezi Guma

Managers and Officials of Council

Colonel Reverend Mantsi Mahopi

Rabbi Ron Hendler

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Fellow Citizens

Programme Director on behalf of the Council, the residents and citizens of Johannesburg I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the Remembrance Sunday service in commemoration of the fallen heroes.

This occasion provides us with a unique opportunity to honour those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in defence of freedom and liberty - but also to rededicate ourselves to the new struggles that we are engaged in.

Since 90 years ago, on 11th November 1918, when the Armistice to end the First World War came into effect and ended the hostilities, Remembrance Day ceremonies are held every year on the Sunday closest to 11 November and are being observed in most countries that formed part of the old British Commonwealth.

Programme Director, the City of Johannesburg took a decision in 1996 to rededicate this Cenotaph in the memory of all who died in defence of freedom and liberty. This also include those who paid the ultimate price in the struggle against Apartheid and oppression in South Africa.

We honour their memory as much as we do those who participated in war-time service and it is indeed a pleasure to see so many veterans of the liberation struggle and their families together with representatives from statutory forces.

We also use this opportunity to honour the contribution made by members of the South African Police Service and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department who have lost

their lives in the line of duty. Our gratitude also goes to those members of Emergency Services who have sacrificed their lives to save others.

We appreciate the presence of family members, colleagues and friends who are honouring the memory of their fallen heroes. Please be assured of the City's appreciation for the sacrifices made by your loved ones and our continuing support for you and your families in the future.

Since 2006, the City has a different theme to highlight the Remembrance Sunday service. In 2007, special tribute was paid to mark the 89th anniversary of the sinking of the SS Mendi, when over 600 black soldiers lost their lives during World War One.

This year, 2008, on the 90th National Remembrance Sunday anniversary, we pay our tribute to the Battle of Square Hill. This battle took place in Palestine where South African Coloured soldiers of the Cape Corps distinguished themselves against Turkish forces loyal to Germany. Casualties of Cape Corps soldiers at Square Hill were 51 killed and 101 wounded.

South African heroes in the First World War were drawn from all sections of the population. Of the 12 452 South African servicemen who died in the War, 3 901 were Africans, Indians and Coloureds.

Joining us for this year's service are children from the historic St. Joseph's Home and St. Nicholas Home. St. Joseph's Home in Sophiatown was built as a memorial to Coloured soldiers who lost their lives in World War One. The home opened its doors in 1923 as an orphanage for the children of these departed soldiers.

Programme Director, we are pleased that this year the marching column has been joined for the first time by veterans on motorcycle - a group known as the Forgotten Soldiers. In our mist, we also have veterans of the Cape Corps.

The National Remembrance Sunday Service has been held at this Cenotaph since the inception of the war memorial in 1926. The Cenotaph was first inaugurated as a war memorial to South Africans, who fell in World War One, 1914 - 1918. Inscriptions to those who died in World War Two were added in 1947. In 2002 a further inscription was added to the west side of the monument to make the Cenotaph inclusive of everyone.

Programme Director, I can think of no better way to remember the sacrifices made by our soldiers than to unite in the battle to create a better Johannesburg, a better Gauteng and a better South Africa. I trust that this day and this ceremony will inspire us to achieve more in our quest to bring a better life for all our people.

Once again and in conclusion, please allow me to welcome every individual and organisation that is present here today to the City of Johannesburg. We hope to see you at next year's Remembrance Sunday service.

Thank you.