

France bestows knighthood upon Thuli Madonsela

Former Public Protector and current chair in Social Justice at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Law, Prof Thuli Madonsela has been appointed as Knight of the Legion of Honour, by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The French Legion of Honour (Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur) celebrates the accomplishments of distinguished individuals, irrespective of sex, social background and nationality. Viewed as the highest decoration in France, it was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802.

The categories of the Order include the degrees Chevalier (Knight), Officier (Officer), Commandeur (Commander), Grand Officier (Grand Officer), and Grand-Croix (Grand Cross).

In his letter to Madonsela, Ambassador Lechevallier said that Madonsela is honoured in recognition of her remarkable achievements in defence of the rule of law and the fight against corruption in South Africa.

Says Madonsela: "I can't find the right words to express the depth of my gratitude to the President and people of France for this immense honour. As indicated in respect of previous awards, I do my work to add value to humanity out of love and gratitude for the privileges life and humanity have given me and in pursuit of my duties. However, a recognition of this magnitude does inspire immense gratitude while spotlighting my work on social justice, the rule of law and ethical governance. I believe it comes from a place of appreciating our interconnectedness as humanity though separated by oceans and borders."

Madonsela added that she accepted the honour on behalf of the Public Protector Team that worked with her in the pursuit of ethical and accountable government for seven years. "I also accept the award on behalf of my colleagues at Stellenbosch University with whom we are pioneering research, policy reform and civic mobilisation on social justice with the hope of catalysing progress towards ending poverty and reducing structural inequality by 2030 in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I also accept it on behalf of my Thuma Foundation colleagues, who are mostly volunteers dedicating their time and resources towards making democracy work for all through democracy leadership and literacy."

Previous South African recipients of the degree Chevalier (Knight) include Nadine Gordimer, Ahmed Kathrada, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mamphela Ramphele, Miriam Makeba, André P. Brink and Zanele Muholi. Former President Nelson Mandela was named a Grand-Croix recipient in 1994.

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