



188, 14th Road, Noordwyk, Midrand, 1685
Private Bag X10, Marshalltown, 2107
Tel: +27 10 493 2500 (Switchboard)
E-mail: enquiries@judiciary.org.za
www.judiciary.org.za

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Media Statement

THE SOUTH AFRICAN JUDICIARY MOURNS THE PASSING OF JUDGE T D PAPIER

The South African judiciary mourns the profound loss of Judge Taswell Papier of the Western Cape Division of the High Court, who passed away on 7 April 2026. Judge Papier's life of selfless service touched countless lives and shaped the nation's pursuit of justice.

A product of the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Judge Papier studied law during the turbulent 1980s as a committed student activist and dedicated scholar. He earned a scholarship for a Master's Degree in Human Rights Law at Harvard University in the USA before returning to open his own practice in Mitchell's Plain, where he served the poor and vulnerable across Western Cape townships. As an attorney, he represented thousands of students and school learners, arrested by apartheid police during protests, as well as members of liberation movements charged with treason, sabotage, and membership in banned organisations.

A pioneer in access to justice, Judge Papier piloted pro bono programmes in the legal profession, making them a professional requirement for attorneys and advocates. His firm later merged with ENS, where he led the pro bono department and excelled in commercial and administrative law. Highly respected, he received the prestigious Global Award for his work in human rights and pro bono programmes. Active in the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL), he held many official positions and was nominated by his colleagues for the bench.

Since his landmark appointment, Judge Papier served with utmost integrity, care, and distinction, presiding over significant cases that advanced constitutional rights, administrative justice, and equity. Known for his kind, gentle, and caring personality, he mentored generations of lawyers and embodied judicial excellence.



He is survived by his wife Joy, son Roscoe, daughter Kayla, mother, father, and sister. Judge Papier will be sorely missed by his family, friends, fellow colleagues, and the South African nation.

Our deepest condolences to his loved ones. His legacy of compassion and justice endures.

Issued by the Office of the Chief Justice on behalf of Judge President N. Mabindla-Boqwana and the Western Cape Judiciary.

Media enquiries:

OCJ Communications

Email: mediaenquiries@judiciary.org.za

