



Republic of South Africa

# South African Government

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## National anthem

### History

A proclamation issued by the (then) State President on 20 April 1994 in terms of the provisions of Section 248 (1) together with Section 2 of the [Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993 \(Act 200 of 1993\)](#), stated that the Republic of South Africa would have two national anthems. They were *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and *The Call of South Africa (Die Stem van Suid-Afrika)*. In terms of [Section 4 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 \(Act 108 of 1996\)](#), and following a proclamation in the *Government Gazette No. 18341* (dated 10 October 1997), a shortened, combined version of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and *The Call of South Africa* is now the national anthem of South Africa.

#### *The Call of South Africa (Die Stem van Suid-Afrika)*

*Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* is a poem written by CJ Langenhoven in May 1918. The music was composed by the Reverend ML de Villiers in 1921.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation played both *God save the King* and *Die Stem* to close their daily broadcasts and the public became familiar with it. It was first sung publicly at the official hoisting of the national flag in Cape Town on 31 May 1928, but it was not until 2 May 1957 that government made the announcement that *Die Stem* had been accepted as the official national anthem of South Africa. In the same year, government also acquired the copyright and this was confirmed by an Act of Parliament in 1959. In 1952, the official English version of the national anthem, *The Call of South Africa* was accepted for official use.

#### *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*

*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was composed in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist mission school teacher. The words of the first stanza were originally written in Xhosa as a hymn. Seven additional stanzas in Xhosa were later added by the poet, Samuel Mqhayi. A Sesotho version was published by Moses Mphahlele in 1942. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was popularised at concerts held in Johannesburg by Reverend JL Dube's Ohlange Zulu Choir. It became a popular church hymn that was later adopted as an anthem at political meetings. It was sung as an act of defiance during the Apartheid years. The first stanza is generally sung in Xhosa or Zulu followed by the Sesotho version. Apparently there is no standard version or translations of *Nkosi* and the words vary from place to place and from occasion to occasion.

## Words

This is the official version of the national anthem, combining *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and *Die Stem/The Call of South Africa*, with a translation in English given in brackets:

### South African National Anthem

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika ( <i>God Bless Africa</i> ) Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo, ( <i>Raise high Her glory</i> ) Yizwa imithandazo yethu, ( <i>Hear our Prayers</i> ) Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo ( <i>God bless us, we her children</i> )	isiXhosa and isiZulu
Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso, ( <i>God protect our nation</i> ) O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho, ( <i>End all wars and tribulations</i> ) O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso, ( <i>Protect us, protect our nation</i> ) Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika. ( <i>Our nation South Africa - South Africa</i> )	Sesotho
Uit die blou van onse hemel, ( <i>Ringing out from our blue heavens</i> ) Uit die diepte van ons see, ( <i>From the depth of our seas</i> ) Oor ons ewige gebergtes, ( <i>Over our everlasting mountains</i> ) Waar die kranse antwoord gee, ( <i>Where the echoing crags resound</i> )	Afrikaans
Sounds the call to come together, And united we shall stand, Let us live and strive for freedom, In South Africa our land.	English

### Protocol on respecting the National Anthem

- The National Anthem should be recited with appropriate respect.
- All should stand to attention with their hands placed at their sides while singing the National Anthem.
- Civilians should take their hats off as a sign of respect.