

Mandela Is Not A Prisoner: ANC

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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Former president Nelson Mandela "is no longer a prisoner" and could attend any election rally he wanted to, the ANC said on Monday.

"It's very clear that Mr Mandela is no longer a prisoner... He's not a prisoner... he wanted to go to a rally in the Eastern Cape... that was Mr Mandela's decision and his call," African National Congress spokeswoman Jessie Duarte told SABC radio.

"We, the ANC, would never risk Madiba's life," she added.

Her comments followed a Sunday Times report that the party had abused the elderly Mandela for electioneering purposes to attend a rally in the Eastern Cape.

ANC leader Jacob Zuma said at the weekend that Mandela had requested to attend a rally in his home province.

But Sunday Times associate editor Brendan Boyle said the way in which Mandela turned up at the rally was "clearly unusual".

Boyle told the SABC that Mandela's attendance was an "unprecedented break in procedure".

Normally, among other things, Mandela would travel with a doctor after undergoing a medical examination and a helicopter would be on stand-by for any emergency.

Boyle also said it was unprecedented that the Nelson Mandela Foundation was not involved in the arrangements.

"How this trip was arranged, we don't know," said Boyle.

Duarte said the ANC did not want to alert the media to Mandela's planned presence at the rally last weekend because it was not sure "until the very last moment that indeed Madiba would come".

"We did not want to raise expectations," said Duarte.

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