

PAC objects to Suzman's name on building

Written by reporter

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Helen Suzman was a brave woman but the Marks Building in Parliament should not be renamed after her, the Pan African Congress said on Wednesday.

"Marks Building in Parliament must be renamed Sharpeville Building, if it must be renamed," said PAC MP Motsoko Pheko in a statement.

"I respect Mrs Helen Suzman. She was a brave person," he added. "Mrs Suzman deserves to be honoured, but this must apply to many PAC leaders such as Mangaliso Sobukwe, Zeph Mothopeng, Jeff Masemola and Nyati Pokela who have been ignored."

On Tuesday, the Democratic Alliance said Parliament's Marks Building, long the home of opposition parties within the parliamentary complex in Cape Town, should be renamed the Helen Suzman Building.

It would be an "appropriate way to commemorate publicly her contribution towards building a non-racial society based on constitutional democracy", said DA leader Helen Zille.

Apartheid critic Suzman died on New Year's Day at the age of 91, and was buried last Sunday in Johannesburg.

On Wednesday, Pheko said some people had been honoured for their role in the country's liberation struggle and some had been "over-honoured" at the expense of others.

"For instance, PAC leaders and martyrs have been treated as if they never existed. It must not be forgotten that it is the blood of PAC martyrs which was spilled in Sharpeville and Langa on 21st March 1960 that made today's Parliament."

Pheko said with "due respect" to the DA's suggestion, it was "the blood of the masses of this country who watered the tree of freedom".

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Honouring the country's people must be devoid of sectarianism.

"Otherwise we shall have a situation such as in Russia where St Petersburg was renamed Leningrad after the overthrow of the Czars, but again renamed St Petersburg after the overthrow of the Communists regime in Russia."