



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ^(L)

HOME (/)

ABOUT (/CONTENT/ABOUT)

NATIONAL SYMBOLS (/NATIONAL-SYMBOLS)

MEDIA ROOM

PROFILES

SERVICES

PUBLICATIONS (/PUBLICATIONS)

CONTACT US (/CONTENT/CONTACT-US)



<https://www.facebook.com/PresidencyZA/?ref=mf>



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<https://www.youtube.com/user/PresidencyZA>



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Agostinho Neto (1922 - 1979)

The Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo in Gold



Agostinho Neto (1922 - 1979) Awarded for:

His contribution to the struggle against colonialism in Angola and for striving for the ideals of freedom, development and solidarity on the African continent.

Profile of Agostinho Neto

Agostinho Neto was born in 1922, in the Icolo e Bengo region in northern Bengo province, Angola, the son of a Protestant Reverend.

Having arrived in Portugal in 1947 to study medicine at Coimbra University, (graduating in 1951), his nationalist anti-colonial agitation brought him to the attention of the Portuguese Police. Together with other young nationalists from African Portuguese-speaking colonies (such as Amilcar Cabral from Guinea-Bissau-Cape Verde, Marcelino dos Santos from Mozambique, and others), Neto formed the Anti-Colonial Movement, with the aim of building a movement of people in the colonies opposed to colonial rule.

Back in Angola, Neto began to work in different youth organisations and in 1952 he founded, together with Angolan marine workers, the African Marine Club, an organisation that exposed the cruelties carried out by the fascist regime. By 1956, the movement for the overthrow of colonial rule was in full swing and the need for an over-arching organisation to take the struggle further became more self-evident. In that year, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was established by various Angolan patriotic organisations. Under the leadership of Neto, the MPLA launched an armed struggle as part of the strategy to achieve national liberation.

In 1975, Angola achieved its independence, with Neto as its first President. Neto died of cancer in 1979 in Moscow, Russia, where he went for treatment.

Neto had a distinguished career as physician, philosopher, liberation fighter and as President of Angola. He was also an accomplished poet.

His anti-colonial zeal, incisive yet inspirational writing, clear vision and love for freedom left an indelible mark on the liberation history of the African continent. He belongs to the restrict pantheon of Africa's original liberation heroes, leaders who fought for and dedicated their lives to the self-determination and freedom of their people.

National Orders Booklets

[National Orders Booklet 2019 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2019\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2019)

[National Orders Booklet 2018 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2018\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2018)

[National Orders Booklet 2017 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2017\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2017)

[National Orders Booklet 2016 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2016\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2016)

[National Orders Booklet 2015 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2015\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2015)

[National Orders Booklet 2014 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2014\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2014)

[National Orders Booklet 2013 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2013\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2013)

[National Orders Booklet 2012 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2012\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2012)

[National Orders Booklet 2011 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2011\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2011)

[National Orders Booklet 2010 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2010\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2010)

[National Orders Booklet 2009 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2009\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2009)

[National Orders Booklet 2008 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2008\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2008)

[National Orders Booklet 2007 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2007\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2007)

[National Orders Booklet 2006 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2006\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2006)

[National Orders Booklet 2005 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2005\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2005)

[National Orders Booklet 2004 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2004\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2004)

[National Orders Booklet 2003 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2003\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2003)

[National Orders Booklet 2002 \(/content/national-orders-booklet-2002\)](/content/national-orders-booklet-2002)

[Home](#)

[Principals](#)

[Services](#)

[Publications &
Documents](#)

[About The
Presidency](#)

[President Cyril Ramaphosa
\(/profiles/president-cyril-](/profiles/president-cyril-)

[Links
\(/content/links\)](/content/links)

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| (/content/about) | ramaphosa%3A-profile) | Tenders | Publications |
| Speeches | Deputy President David Mabuza | (/procurement/active-publications) | tenders) |
| (/speeches) | (/profiles/deputy-president-david-mabuza%3A-profile) | Vacancies | Documents |
| Diary of Events | Acting Minister Khumbudzo | (/vacancies) | (/documents) |
| (/calendar-node-field-event-date) | Ntshavheni (/profiles/acting-minister-khumbudzo-ntshavheni) | Contact Us | Annual Reports |
| Media | Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (/profiles/minister-maite-nkoana-mashabane%3A-profile) | (/content/contact-us) | (/report-type/annual-reports) |
| Registration | Deputy Minister Hlengiwe Mkhize (/profiles/deputy-minister-hlengiwe-mkhize%3A-profile) | Tenders | PAIA (/report-type/promotion-access-information-manual) |
| (/media-registration) | Deputy Minister Thembi Siweya (/profiles/deputy-minister-thembi-siweya%3A-profile) | (/procurement) | |
| National Orders | Dr Tshepo Motsepe (/profiles/dr-tshepo-motsepe%3A-profile) | | |
| (/national-orders) | Former Principals (/content/former-principals) | | |
| Legal disclaimers | | | |
| (/content/legal-disclaimers) | | | |