



# MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC  
Attorney General  
Minister for Citizenship  
Minister for Regulatory Reform

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Embargoed 5am Monday March 8, 2010

## **MANDELA'S LEGAL COUNSEL, GEORGE BIZOS SC, VISITS SYDNEY**

Attorney General John Hatzistergos today paid tribute to the world renowned human rights advocate and long-time legal counsel to Nelson Mandela, George Bizos SC, who is in Sydney this week.

"Over more than half a century, George Bizos has forged a reputation for dogged commitment to democracy and civil rights in the most difficult political circumstances," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"Throughout the course of his career, he has borne witness to vast changes in South African society, legal systems and political landscape.

"George Bizos has dedicated much of his professional life to the protection of liberty and the promotion of democracy.

"Today, I am proud to welcome him to Sydney on behalf of the NSW Government."

Mr Hatzistergos said a list of the trials George Bizos was involved in reads like a history of the democratic struggle in southern Africa:

- the Rivonia trial in 1964, where he worked together with the great anti-racist Bram Fischer to defend the capital charges against Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela.
- the 1978 inquest into the death of Steve Biko, where he worked together with the famous Sir Sydney Kentridge QC.
- the 1985 to 1989 Delmas treason trial of 22 anti-apartheid activists, which saw him nicknamed Matla a Tlou – "the one with the strength of an elephant" – in honour of his perseverance.
- the late nineties Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, in which he acted on behalf of families of victims of the apartheid regime, including the family of Steve Biko, to resist amnesty being granted to their killers.
- and most recently, the defence of Morgan Tsvangirai on charges of plotting a coup against the ZANU-PF regime in Zimbabwe.

Mr Hatzistergos said the extraordinary service given by George Bizos to the development of the new South Africa is all the more remarkable when his own story is considered.

Born in Greece, he endured the German occupation during World War II until he escaped, across the sea to Egypt. In 1941 he arrived in South Africa as a teenager where, unable to speak English, he worked in a Greek café in Johannesburg.

After mastering English and Afrikaans, he entered Witwatersrand University and came upon the ideas and the personalities which transformed him into one of the leading figures in the anti-apartheid struggle.

**Media are invited to hear George Bizos SC speak at a breakfast this morning hosted by the NSW Bar Association at the Selborne Chambers, 174 Phillip St, Sydney. Monday, March 8, 8am.**