



FRIENDS and family carry the body of anti-apartheid activist and scientist Professor Hoosen 'Jerry' Coovadia at the Riverside Soofie Musjid in Durban. Coovadia passed away yesterday morning. The funeral was attended by the ANC's Dr Zweli Mkhize and Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan yesterday. | RAJESH JANTILAL

PIONEER

Tributes pour in for scientist Coovadia

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LONG-TIME friends, the presidency and an academic institution have paid tribute to renowned medical expert and Struggle stalwart Professor Hoosen Mahomed "Jerry" Coovadia following his death yesterday at age 83.

His funeral was yesterday.

President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his deep sadness at Coovadia's passing.

"On behalf of government and the nation, the president offers his deepest condolences to Professor Coovadia's wife, Dr Zubeida Hamed, his son, Professor Imraan Coovadia, and daughter, Dr Anuschka Coovadia."

Ramaphosa said Coovadia was an "outstanding scientist and committed anti-apartheid campaigner who dedicated himself to our liberation Struggle. He also dedicated himself to the physical well-being and social inclusion of people all over the world through his enterprising mission as a scientist and architect of public health policies.

"His pioneering, globally acclaimed research into mother-to-child transmission of HIV has rendered an immeasurable legacy to humanity in terms of which persons living with HIV are able to live long and healthy lives subject to early detection and access to treatment."

Coovadia's close friend, retired Judge Thumba Pillay, said he had lost a great friend and fellow activist in the fight for the upliftment of the South

African community.

"He had been ill for some time, so we last spoke about six months ago, I will miss his friendship and I will miss his company."

He said Coovadia was a fearless man who stood for the truth and what he believed in. He recalled the time when the professor stood against the government of the then president Thabo Mbeki on the issue of Aids denialism and came under fire for his stance, but never wavered.

"He was also very humble, you could never tell that he had accomplished so much and was internationally renowned," Pillay said.

The ANC in a statement described Coovadia as a pioneer.

"He was popularly known as Comrade Jerry among his peers, colleagues and comrades in academia and the entire liberation movement.

"Comrade Jerry was a pioneer and a member of the Natal Indian Congress, the United Democratic Front, the SACP and the ANC. The ANC dips its revolutionary flag in mourning an intellectual giant and great patriot who dedicated his life to freedom, equality and justice.

"The ANC extends its deepest sympathies and sends condolences to his family, friends and comrades."

Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, director and associate scientific director at the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa) said: "It is with heartfelt sadness that our family mourns the loss of Professor Jerry Coovadia. We

were as a family blessed to have him at our side – in tough and challenging times. We had the privilege of his wisdom, his words of encouragement and his mentorship. His frankness and depth of intellect have shaped our careers and commitment in social justice. Jerry was an extraordinary human being unwavering in his commitment to serve humanity. He is one of South Africa's foremost intellectuals and his commitment to social justice, equity and fairness was a central tenet to his core belief systems.

"Beyond his science work he fought tirelessly against the apartheid system and was forthright in his criticism on any form of corruption. His everlasting legacy was a principled one founded on his beliefs of justice, fairness and equity for all."

In a statement, Professor Nana Poku, vice-chancellor and principal of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said Coovadia would be remembered for his contributions to global health policies and groundbreaking research in HIV/Aids transmission from mother to child.

"Not one to balk at speaking truth to power, he is well-known for insisting on scientific integrity and campaigning for the roll-out of antiretroviral therapy.

"The university is grateful for his contribution to academia and mourns the loss of a legend and scientist. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. May his legacy live on through the many lives he has touched."