

The Star

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Please show some respect

DURING their darkest days of the Struggle, Burmese democrats viewed South Africa's world icon, Nelson Mandela, as a hero. Australian Aborigines were inspired by him. Even during their years of Bush conservatism, Americans loved claiming Madiba as their own.

And there was a time Indians were suggesting he be given a special name, along the lines of their iconic Gandhi – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

It is therefore a crying shame, a disgrace that we, as South Africans, cannot take responsibility for properly maintaining and administering a museum named after him.

In Parliament last week, it was reported that the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape was not being managed in a manner befitting one of the world's greatest figures of the 20th and 21st centuries.

We fervently hope that those responsible for the upkeep of the museum will do the right thing – and ensure that Mandela's memory is properly respected.

Until now, the signs have not been good.

A report on the museum by Parliament's arts and culture portfolio committee painted a grim picture of an administration in chaos.

It said the museum, which houses gifts and awards Madiba received during his presidency, is being crippled by a policy of appointing acting chief executive and a "rampant failure" to adhere to labour laws.

It is simply not good enough to have a situation in which there is one manager for every staff member.

It is ridiculous too to have staff members who do not have proper job descriptions, and who are placed in jobs for which they are not qualified.

Madiba was the inspiration for millions of South Africans for generations. In many ways, he continues to inspire people today.

Even from his prison cell, he was the catalyst who inspired activists in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape – and, in fact, all over the country and the world.

He motivated us to kick down the mental and physical barriers that divided so many of us for more than 300 years.

The least that can be done is to run a building named after him properly.