

Veteran journalist Thandanani Dlamini has died

Thandanani Dlamini, 60, died on Sunday 15 January, at her home following a short illness.



Source © olegdudko [123rf](#) [123rf](#) Veteran journalist Thandanani Dlamini has died

According to the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) she had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer in October last year. The Forum said in a statement that it was saddened to learn of the passing of Dlamini.

"Affectionately known as TDK amongst family, friends, and peers, she dedicated her youth to fighting for democracy having joined the ANC at the age of 19.

"Dlamini was a member of Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the ANC, and lived in Tanzania, Canada, and the United Kingdom, where she furthered her studies while continuing to serve her country and fight for democracy

On her return from exile, she briefly worked for the United Nations (UN) before joining the SABC as a journalist," says Sanef.

Radio journalist and YFM founder

Dlamini spent most of her adult life working as a radio journalist in both commercial and public media.

“She was part of the pioneering team that successfully launched YFM in 1997 – the country’s first black urban youth radio station and read its inaugural news bulletin - a moment she reflected on often with a deep sense of pride and achievement.

“As the news editor of YFM, she worked tirelessly to ensure that the commercial platform reflected honestly and authentically on the realities facing young people.

“Today YFM remains a success story, etched in the DNA of radio in the country,” says Sanef.

A critical thinker

“She was principled and unflinching in her quest to protect the critical voices that she insisted were necessary for a new democratic South Africa. For that she often walked into many fires but remained unrepentant,” says Dirk Hartford, former YFM CEO.

Dlamini later returned to the SABC serving as a senior producer and later executive producer of SAFM’s news current affairs programmes.

“She was proud to work at the national broadcaster at a time when the SABC pioneered dynamic and leading news and current affairs,” says Sanef.

Former colleague Thoraya Pandy who worked with her during both stints at the SABC remembers Dlamini as a critical thinker who looked beyond the obvious angles, challenged authority when appropriate, and gave a voice to ordinary people.

“She had an astonishing way of finding newsmakers from a small town in Sierra Leone to a spokesperson for the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. She simply wouldn’t give up and always got her story,” she recalls.

Back to her passion

More recently she joined the University of Eswatini sticking with her passion and teaching in the field of journalism.

While at the University of Eswatini, she founded the campus radio station in 2021 that navigated the tumultuous unrest in that country.

“She loved working with young people, showing us the ropes, teaching the basics of journalism but importantly she taught us about respect for ourselves, our work, and our colleagues. The radio station and teaching us brought her so much joy,” says Nonjabulo Mabunda a student at the university.

She is survived by her son Pilani, grandchild Zweli, and siblings.

TDK will be buried on Saturday Saturday, 21 January, in Nsigweni, Ethulani in Eswatini. The service will commence at 5 am.