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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TOP TEN LEARNERS FROM FOUR PROVINCES COMPETE FOR THE TOP THREE ESSAY POSITIONS**

**Mthatha:** The Nelson Mandela Museum, in partnership with Old Mutual, proudly announces the Top Ten finalists of the 2026 *Human Rights Essay Writing Competition*. The annual national programme invites Grade 10 and 11 learners to engage in research and critical writing on human rights issues. This year's topic required learners to evaluate government progress in fulfilling one of South Africa's socio-economic rights.

An open invitation was circulated nationally through the Museum's social media platforms and activations. More than 500 essays were received from learners in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and Mpumalanga. The adjudication process was overseen by independent adjudicators from Walter Sisulu University and District Officials from the Department of Education. From 600 submissions, 100 essays were shortlisted, culminating in the Top Ten finalists.

The Top Ten will deliver oral presentations on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2026 at the Nelson Mandela Museum Bhunga Building in Mthatha from 10h00, where the Top Three winners will be announced. The Museum will provide transport and accommodation for all finalists. The Top Three winners will receive electronic gadgets (latest cell phones with one-year data bundles), trophies, and certificates. All Top Ten participants will receive certificates of participation.

Acting CEO Mandisi Msongelwa commended the strong participation but noted the need to improve representation from all nine provinces in future editions. The competition remains a vital platform for youth to engage with human rights, critical thinking, and the importance of South Africa's Bill of Rights as a cornerstone of democracy.

Media are invited to attend the oral presentations and prize-giving ceremony.

**For RSVP and enquiries:**

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