



**MMC: CLLR LUBABALO MAGWENTSHU
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF JOHANNESBURG**

Media Statement

For Immediate Release

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City mourns passing of top SA singer and songwriter Zahara Bulelwa Mkutukana

It is with great sadness that the City learns of the passing of the young songbird Zahara. Bulelwa Mkutukana, born in East London in the Eastern Cape, started singing at the age of six in the school choir. At the age of nine, her vocal range and talent led to her being selected to join the senior choir.

Zahara catapulted into the limelight at the age of 24 with her debut album *Loliwe*, released in 2011. The album hit gold status within 72 hours of its release. It became the second-fastest selling album in South African history after Brenda Fassie's *Memeza* (1997). She won eight awards, including "Best Female Artist" and "Album of the Year" at the 18th South African Music Awards (SAMAs).

Mkutukana's music made reference to realities familiar to many, and her lyrics sought to uplift and encourage others as she often drew inspiration from her own life, upbringing and realities. In an interview she described her music as a metaphor of encouragement despite the challenges that each of us may face.

The essence of her talent was in the many roles she played as a singer-songwriter, composer and guitarist, whose style referenced that of neo-soul artists such as India Arie and Tracy Chapman, while referencing African artists and singers. The Afro-soul singer made music in isiXhosa.

She released six studio albums, won multiple awards, toured the globe, worked with and performed among greats and was herself a giant in the music industry. Zahara made music that spoke to the soul and sought to heal through melody, and her voice will forever be part of the musical essence of our country.

She was an incredible talent with a bright future. She sadly died on 11 December 2023 after briefly falling ill. South Africa has lost a shining star and we mourn with the Mkutukana family. Our deepest condolences to friends and loved ones.

“In the words of Zahara in her song *Destiny*, some people live their dreams and some their destiny passes them by, sorrow and shame God knows how long it will take to reach my destiny. I pray that her destiny was fulfilled and that she knew she was loved and appreciated by this nation. May her musical and talented soul rest in eternal peace,” said Cllr Lubabalo Magwentshu, the MMC for Community Development in the City.

Ends

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