

Helen Suzman

ACTSA mourns the passing away of the celebrated anti-apartheid campaigner Helen Suzman. We send our condolences to her family and friends.

Helen Suzman was elected in 1952 as the MP for the Johannesburg suburb of Houghton. She was the only candidate since the first South African Parliament was established in 1910, to be elected by a white constituency on a platform that rejected racial discrimination.

Despite being a lone voice in Parliament for 13 years, Helen was consistently an outspoken critic of the regime speaking out on police torture, detention without trial and abuses in prison. She was a regular visitor to Robben Island prison and would regularly criticise the terrible conditions in which Nelson Mandela and others were detained, securing some improvement for the detainees.

In recognition of her significant contribution to the fight against apartheid Helen was twice nominated for the Nobel peace prize, won the UN Human Rights Award, was the recipient of 25 honorary degrees and made an honorary dame by the Queen.