

Beat: Vips

Nobel-winning anti-apartheid author Gordimer dead at 90

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USPA News - Nadine Gordimer, the South African author known for her anti-apartheid work and the 1991 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, died at her home in Johannesburg on Sunday, her family said Monday. She was 90 years old.

A family statement issued through law firm ENSafrica said Gordimer died in her sleep at her home in Johannesburg on Sunday, but it did not provide details about the cause of death. Her son Hugo and daughter Oriane, as well as other caregivers, were all with her when she passed away, the statement said. Prof. Njabulo Ndebele, Chairman of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, sent his condolences to Gordimer's family and friends on behalf of the foundation, saying they were "deeply saddened" by her death. Mandela struck up a friendship with Gordimer when Mandela was a young activist and the two continued their friendship after Mandela's release from prison in 1990. In Mandela's autobiography, describing his time in prison, he had written: "I tried to read books about South Africa or by South African writers. I read all the unbanned novels of Nadine Gordimer and learned a great deal about the white liberal sensibility." A statement issued by the Nelson Mandela Foundation called Gordimer "South Africa's grande dame of literature" and said that "a great writer, a patriot and strong voice for equality and democracy in the world" had been lost. Frederik Willem de Klerk, who served as South Africa's last apartheid-era leader, also expressed his sadness over Gordimer's death. "She was a giant of South African literature and was a prominent critic of apartheid before 1994," his foundation said. "She continued to be critical of unconstitutional behavior from any quarter in South Africa and was particularly opposed to any steps that might limit the freedom of the press." Gordimer was born in Springs, South Africa, on November 20, 1923, and began writing at a very early age. She published her first story when she was just 15 years old. Over her lifetime she wrote 15 novels as well as several compilations of short stories, non-fiction and other works. Her works were published in 40 languages around the world. She was particularly passionate about the devastating consequences of apartheid, and many of her novels and short stories dwelled on the effects of racism, causing some of her work to be banned during the apartheid-era. "She cared most deeply about South Africa, its culture, its people, and its on-going struggle to realize its new democracy," her family said in Monday's statement. One of Gordimer's proudest moments came when she testified at the Delmas Trial in 1986 and contributed to saving the lives of 22 African National Congress (ANC) party members who had been accused of treason, the family said. She also worked on biographical sketches of Mandela and his co-accused during the trial in efforts to publicize the trial overseas. In 1991, the Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to Gordimer, describing her work as "magnificent epic writing" that had been "of very great benefit to humanity." Gordimer's family requested privacy on Monday and said a private memorial service will be announced at a later date.

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