

Pele "a global inspiration and champion of peace"

President Cyril Ramaphosa has expressed his sadness at the passing of global football icon and social activist, Pelé.



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Edson Arantes do Nascimento passed away at the age of 82 after an extended illness.

“President Ramaphosa offers his deepest sympathy to Pelé’s family and friends and to the government and people of Brazil. The President has expressed his condolences in letters to President Jair Bolsonaro as well as incoming President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva,” said the Presidency in a statement on Friday.

The only three-time FIFA World Cup champion, Pelé dazzled both fans and competitors alike with a skillful and entertaining style of play that made him a global star and icon of excellence in football.

He was a campaigner for improved social conditions in his home country and internationally, and served as Minister of Sport in Brazil from January 1995 to April 1998.

“During the eight decades of his life, Pelé not only filled football stadiums with exhilaration but he filled hearts and homes with hope and the knowledge that adversity was surmountable,” said the President.

“He was a global inspiration who embodied the best that sport has to offer as an exhibition of physical endeavour and as a means to transform individuals and entire societies from within.

“His endurance and impact on the field of play inspired the resilience with which Pelé worked for peace and justice globally.

“Pelé will be missed by multiple generations of people worldwide who were touched by his life even if they never set foot in a stadium,” said President Ramaphosa.

Pelé visited South Africa in 1995 and met President Nelson Mandela.

According to the Presidency, the two global figures expressed profound admiration for one another based on their common social and political causes.

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