



## Press Release

13 October 2005

### Archives, Truth and Reconciliation

World-renowned human rights advocate and South African Constitutional Court Judge, **Justice Albie Sachs**, will deliver the **inaugural National Archives Lecture**, on the topic '*Archives, Truth and Reconciliation*' - on October 24.

Well acquainted with the harsh realities of oppressive regimes - having been twice jailed without trial by South African security police during apartheid in the 1960s - Justice Sachs will speak on the possibilities and limitations of public records in preserving democratic values and human rights, and unearthing the truth about government actions in the past.

Forced into exile in 1966 and almost losing his life as the victim of a car bomb assassination attempt in 1988, Justice Sachs' experience with truth and reconciliation has come full circle, with his former place of incarceration - Roeland Street Prison - recently transformed into the Cape Town Archives.

Justice Sachs said: "The high perimeter walls are still there, and the gate through which I entered and eventually left; my stomach lurches every time I pass on my way home from Court."

The lecture has been organised in partnership with London University's School of Advanced Study and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Justice Sachs will deliver the lecture in the Beveridge Hall, at Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1, on Monday, October 24, at 5.30pm. Seating capacity is limited but entry is free of charge.

**Albie Sachs will be available for interviews via phone in the week leading up to The National Archives Lecture (October 17-21).** Please contact Stuart Brennan in The National Archives Press Office on 0208 8392 5277 or [stuart.brennan@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.brennan@nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
An image of Justice Sachs is also available.

A multi-disciplinary seminar precedes the lecture, addressing the theme: *Secrecy, Openness and Reconciliation: archives in an international perspective*. This will be held in Senate House at 2.30pm. The speakers are: Richard Thomas, UK Information Commissioner; Hans Altendorf, Direktor bei der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes DDR ('the Stasi archives'); Gerry Slater, Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Northern Ireland; Graham Dominy, National Archivist of South Africa; and Professor Ben Magubane, Member of the Declassification Board of the records of the Apartheid regime.

Attendance at the seminar is by invitation only; those interested in attending should email [Olwen.Myhill@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Olwen.Myhill@sas.ac.uk)

## Background

Justice Sachs was born in South Africa and started his career in human rights activism at the age of seventeen as a second year law student at the University of Cape Town. Upon graduation he began practising as an Advocate at the Cape Town Bar, working mainly in civil rights, defending people charged under racist statutes and repressive security laws, many of whom were facing the death sentence.

Sachs was forced to flee the country of his birth in 1966 after being detained without trial by the South Africa security police and kept in solitary confinement for 168 days. He pursued an academic career in England until 1977, when he became Professor of Law at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. It was while in Mozambique that Albie Sachs lost most of his right arm and the sight in one eye in an attempted bomb assassination by the same South African security agents.

During the 1980s Sachs worked closely with Oliver Tambo, leader of the ANC in exile, and helped draft the organisation's Code of Conduct, as well as its statutes. After recovering from the bomb attack he devoted himself full-time to preparations for a new democratic Constitution for South Africa. In 1990 he returned home, and as a member of the Constitutional Committee and the National Executive of the ANC took an active part in the negotiations that led to South Africa becoming a constitutional democracy. After the first democratic election in 1994 he was appointed by President Nelson Mandela to serve on the newly established Constitutional Court.

Albie Sachs has a Ph.D. from the University of Sussex in England; has been Professor at Columbia University in New York; was founding Director of the South Africa Constitution Studies Centre based at the University of London - an organisation which moved to the University of the Western Cape in 1992; he is a member of the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee and has helped to draft the International Declaration on the Human Genome; and is a founding member of the International Cricket Council's Code of Conduct Commission.

Justice Sachs has written extensively on human rights, culture, gender and the environment including: *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*, and more recently *The Free Diary of Albie Sachs*.