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Putin Calls Nelson Mandela 'Greatest Humanist of Our Time'

By The Moscow Times

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Putin writing in a book of condolences honoring Nelson Mandela at the South African Embassy late on Monday. **Mikhail Metzel**

President Vladimir Putin has visited the South African Embassy in Moscow to write a message in the book of condolences dedicate to Nelson Mandela, who died last week.

Putin called Mandela the greatest humanist of the last two centuries and said his policy of promoting racial equality should be held up as an example for future generations to follow, Itar-Tass reported.

"A brave and wise man, Nelson Mandela always fought for his beliefs, but at the same time remained a great humanist and a peacemaker," Putin wrote during his visit to the embassy on Monday. "This approach is in great demand in today's world; the search for compromises is the best foundation for consent and cooperation."

Speaking about the former South African president's role in global politics, Putin said Mandela was "one of the greatest politicians" of past and present and was on a par with Mahatma Gandhi and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Mandela was "a friend of the Russian people," Putin wrote, adding that the Soviet Union had always supported African nations in their struggle against racial segregation.

Russia and South Africa signed a declaration on strategic partnership in March that will pave the way for future cooperation between the two countries, Putin said.

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