



Association of
Visual Language Interpreters
of Canada

News Release

For Immediate Release
December 12, 2013

AVLIC urges the South African Government to Apologize for Recent Access Failure at Mandela Memorial.

Squamish, BC (December 12, 2013) - The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) fully supports the Deaf individuals around the world, the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) in lobbying the South African government for an explanation as to the failure to provide meaningful access for Deaf people around the world during the memorial service for Nelson Mandela.

AVLIC supports the sole use of qualified sign language interpreters. Every country has a different determination of "qualified" however formal training is typically included in that definition. This is a very unfortunate and ironic situation as all Deaf viewers were denied access to the memorial service of a man who fought for the basic human rights of all citizens of the world.

While this is the first time the AVLIC Board of Directors has heard of an individual potentially pretending to be an interpreter, the use of untrained interpreters is, sadly, quite common. However, the use of untrained or under qualified interpreters can be detrimental to all parties involved. This situation highlights the need for continued public education about the formal training required to be a qualified sign language interpreter. Interpreter and Deaf associations have and will continue to lobby governments for standards so that Deaf individuals have meaningful access to all situations.

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) have released a joint statement in support of the Deaf Association in South Africa and highlights the requirements of qualified interpreters under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). AVLIC members and Deaf Canadians look forward to a response from the South African government that highlights an action plan to prevent this from occurring again.

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About AVLIC:

The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) is a non-profit, professional association for interpreters whose working languages include a sign language. AVLIC was incorporated in 1979 and has eight Affiliate Chapters across the country. AVLIC is the only certifying body for ASL-English interpreters in Canada through the means of our Canadian Evaluation System. Among a variety of services, we offer a Dispute Resolution Process to maintain quality and accountability to the field of interpreting. For more information, visit www.avlic.ca

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