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Présidente  
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**Luca Visentini**

General Secretary  
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**Cleopas Sipho Dlamini,**

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HTUR/ZM

2 December, 2022

**ITUC condemns state-sanctioned violence and the ban on trade union gatherings**

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 200 million workers in 163 countries including Eswatini, to condemn acts of violence, intimidation, harassment, wanton shooting, arson and repression against trade unions and members of the public by the security forces in your country.

We are deeply concerned by the current conditions in Eswatini, which are akin to a state of emergency, following the deployment of military forces in all locations. The military has erected roadblocks and is searching citizens and harassing them, in particular, workers.

On 11 November, 2022, Kayise Qwabe, an employee of MTN and a former NEC member of the Swaziland Communications Workers Union, was shot at by military officials, who indiscriminately fired live bullets at her car. She sustained serious injuries and was admitted to a private clinic in Mbabane.

Some days later, on 17 November, a student, Denzel Maziya from John Wesley High School was tortured by the military on his way to school and accused of running in town.

Mr Prime Minister, we are also seriously concerned by the events of 15 November, 2022 that occurred at the Global Village Guest House, Manzini. Here, a team comprising military forces and senior police officials raided the hotel at midnight and harassed members of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) during their stay as part of a trade union workshop. The trade union members were violently and arbitrarily searched by state security forces and, in the process, subjected to degrading and inhumane conduct.

The security forces then returned at around 0400hrs and repeated their aggressive search of union officials. They vandalised their rooms and confiscated their mobile phones. They engaged in snooping and carried out several interrogations of trade union representatives, questioning their presence. The trade union members and their leaders were left understandably traumatised and intimidated.

The ITUC is also concerned that, since October 2022, your government has unilaterally stopped the payment of the salary of Mbongwa Dlamini, the President of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) without justification. In another incident, Mbongwa Dlamini's home came under attack on 3 April, 2022, from alleged security forces who fired live bullets. He also faces spurious charges of obstructing police, a charge that was closed but has now been reopened. We view all these attempts as retaliation for his trade union activities following the call by his union for improved teachers' wages and conditions of service.

Mr Prime Minister, the above incidents indicate a worrying trend of rights abuses and a lack of respect

for the rule of law, civil liberties and human rights in your country that we strongly condemn. We are deeply concerned that the climate of fear and violence is aimed at preventing trade unionists and human rights defenders from exercising their trade union and human rights.

We note that on 5 May, 2022, your government accepted an ILO voluntary conciliation process in case No. 3425, which is pending the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association, following reports of a series of attacks on the trade union movement. We are surprised that, despite such commitment to dialogue, your government has not relented in its crackdown on our members exercising their right to freedom of association and assembly. According to the Global Rights Index 2022, your country falls among the top 10 worst countries for working people.

While acknowledging the engagement of the government and its social partners for the launch of the second Decent Work Country Programme (EDWCP), 2022-2025 on 17 November, 2022, we remain concerned that the outcomes envisaged in the EDWCP may not be achieved if this pattern of state repression against trade union leaders and activists persists.

We call upon your government to fulfil its obligation under ILO Convention 87 regarding the right to freedom of association, to investigate the incidents of violence perpetrated by the security forces, to release all those detained by the military and other security forces for exercising their trade union rights and civil liberties, and to drop all charges against trade union leaders and activists.

We remain available to hold further discussions with your government to ensure that your government fulfils its obligations under the Constitution of the ILO and Convention 87.

Yours sincerely,



Luca Visentini  
General Secretary

cc: Mr Phila Wiseman Buthelezi, Minister of Labour and Social Security: butheleziphila3@gmail.com

cc: Embassy of the Kingdom of Eswatini: brussels@eswatini-embassy.eu

cc: UN Human Rights: civilsociety@ohchr.org

cc: African Union Commission: chairperson@africa-union.org

cc: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR): au-banjul@africa-union.org

cc: Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA): tucoswa@swazi.net

cc: Delegation of the EU to Eswatini: delegation-eswatini@eeas.europa.eu