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International Trade Union Confederation
Confédération syndicale internationale
Confederación Sindical Internacional
Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund

Cleopas Siphon Dlamini,
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HTUR/ZM

7 February 2023

ITUC and EI denounce the brutal murder of Thulani Maseko and the continued attack on trade union leaders in Eswatini.

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing 200 million workers in 168 countries and territories and Education International, representing more than 32.5 million teachers and education workers in 178 countries, including Eswatini, to denounce the brutal murder of Thulani Maseko, a human and trade union rights lawyer, by unknown gunmen. We further denounce your government's forced exile of Sticks Nkambule and Mbongwa Dlamini, both leading representatives of trade unions in Eswatini.

Thulani Maseko was brutally murdered at his home on the evening of 21 January 2023 in front of his family members. At the time of his death, he was the chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) that is spearheading dialogue in your country for a democratic Eswatini. Thulani Maseko was an adviser to the trade union movement in Eswatini and represented many of them in their legal challenges.

We also note and condemn the continued attacks on trade union leaders Messrs Sticks Nkambule, secretary general of the Swaziland Transport and Communication Workers Union (SWATCAWU) and Mbongwa Dlamini, president of the National Association of Teachers (SNAT). The two are being persecuted for their trade union activities following protest actions for better wages and working conditions conducted by their respective members. As a result, both men have been forced into exile to safeguard their lives and security.

We are seriously concerned by the threats made by the Minister of Public Service, Mabulala Maseko, to stop the check-off system for the collection of membership dues for the SNAT. The Government has also refused to reflect the 3% increase in SNAT dues or to include new members recruited by SNAT.

These attacks continue despite your government's and the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland's (TUCOSWA) agreement to submit similar disputes for mediation through the ILO, as exemplified by Case No.3425 currently pending before the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

We reiterate that both ILO Convention 87 and 98 have been ratified by Eswatini and guarantee workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ratification of these two conventions places an obligation on Eswatini to ensure workers "enjoy adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in respect to their employment".

We welcome the statements issued by the UN, AU and SADC on both the murder of Thulani and the growing political tensions in Eswatini and urgently demand independent and credible investigations into the murder of Thulani Maseko and all those murdered since 2021 to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice. We also demand the safe return of those forced into exile.

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We call upon your government to immediately take steps to stop security operatives carrying out any further repression and the extra-judicial killing of trade unionists and human rights defenders and that you choose social dialogue to bring peace, social reconciliation and development to the people and workers of Eswatini.

Yours sincerely,



Owen Tudor
Deputy General Secretary



David Edwards
E.I. General Secretary

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