



Int Dept/Leif Isaksson/gp

DATE
2012-09-03
YOUR DATE

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M. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
Hospital Hill
Off Mhlambanyatsi Road
Mbabane
Swaziland

Respect for trade union rights in Swaziland

Prime Minister,

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), representing 1.5 million members, is writing to you on the occasion of Swaziland Independence Day on 6 September. That day will mark the 44th anniversary of your country's liberation from British rule. Unfortunately, it is also only slightly more than seven months away from the 40th anniversary of the state of emergency which continues to be in force.

While the serious breaches of ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association have been exposed for a number of consecutive years in its Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS), the most recent events do not bode very well for your government's efforts to improve on this count.

On 13 July, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) wrote to you to protest the way your police handled the peaceful protest actions by the National Public Service and Allied Workers' Union (NAPSAWU), the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers' Union (STAWU) and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), on Wednesday 11 July. These actions were met with disproportionate violence, including the use of tear gas canisters, batons and rubber bullets, and NAPSAWU President Quinton Dlamini was arrested. The police's violent interventions led to twelve people having to be hospitalised. The unions had organised a strike in order to demand a mere 4.5 % salary adjustment, which is way below Swaziland's inflation rate.

On 30 July, STAWU's legal officer Bazel Tfwala was arrested by the police without charges. On the same day, STAWU General Secretary Simanga Shongwe was detained whilst protesting Tfwala's arrest and was driven 30km away from Manzini, where he was thrown out of the vehicle.

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The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

Earlier on, the union's organiser, Sticks Nkambule, had been temporarily detained after a transport strike on 16 - 17 July.

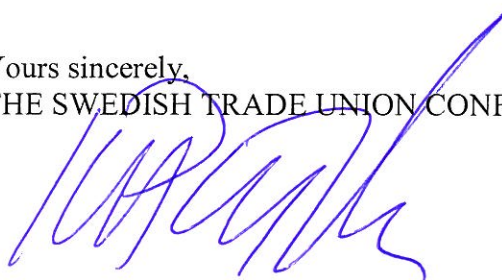
Since 1 August, your government has also started firing hundreds of teachers across the country, including the SNAT's entire executive. On 3 August, the Industrial Court of Swaziland ruled that those dismissals were unlawful and requested the government to withdraw them.

It has to be stressed that these events are taking place while Swaziland's national trade union centre, the ITUC-affiliated Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA), is banned after its de-registration on the basis of fickle legal arguments against which the ITUC has protested on numerous occasions, and after which a Complaint was filed with the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA).

Prime Minister, it is out of solidarity with our Swazi friends and colleagues that we urge you to finally start taking into account their demands for constitutional reform, multiparty democracy and the full respect of trade union rights. These demands are legitimate and they are only standing up for what is self-evident. They should be able to exercise their legitimate rights without having to fear persecution, harassment, intimidation or violence. LO hopes that this year's Independence Day will finally herald true change for your people, who throughout the years have endured their scourge with admirable resolve and dignity. We therefore want to call on you very strongly not to react to their legitimate, peaceful actions with ever more violence and repression. Trade union rights are human rights.

Yours sincerely,

THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (LO)



Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson
President