



Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) Press Statement 5 April 2012 Mass Democratic Movement To Give Birthday Gift to King Mswati

One of the most heartening developments in Swaziland over the last year has been the emergence of a united and purposeful trade union federation bringing together all Swazi trade unions into a single entity, the Trades Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOWSA). Against all the odds, and as an example to trade unions everywhere, TUCOSWA has given the working class and the poor of Swaziland, not just organisation and collective power, but also hope and a deeply committed leadership. TUCOSWA also plays a pivotal role in the broad based Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) and the Swaziland Democracy Campaign which serves as its campaigning wing, helping to provide a platform, not just for concerted popular action but for an inclusive engagement where all democratic forces can support one another, and develop plans for a truly democratic Swaziland.

Contrast this constructive development with the latest antics of the Royal Elite, who have misruled Swaziland for almost 40 years through a system of chronic patronage, draconian anti-democratic legislation, corruption and brute force. The King, no doubt suffering from chronic illusions of popularity, has proclaimed that those who live in some of the poorest parts of Swaziland (and there are many parts of Swaziland that experience abject poverty) must contribute to his upcoming birthday celebrations. This is a call from Africa's last absolute monarch, who is listed in Forbes magazine as having a personal fortune of over \$US 100 million, not including the vast amounts of money he pillages from the public purse. And talking of which, it has now been confirmed that the King has just given himself a birthday gift of R1.8 billion from the R7 billion received from the Southern African Customs Union! And this from a 'people loving monarch' who still has the shocking audacity to demand that the poor give up their meagre resources.

One of the key issues that TUCOSWA and the SUDF are mobilising around next week on April 11 - 14 is the demand for a Peoples Government. Their call could not be better timed or be more appropriate to the real needs of the long suffering Swazi people. Increasing numbers of ordinary Swazis, in the urban and rural areas, have come to the conclusion that if the Royal Elite is the problem, then democracy is the answer. That is why they will risk the baton charges, the tear gas, the illegal imprisonments, the bullying, threats and intimidation to march on the streets next week.

In a last ditch attempt to isolate and intimidate the trade union movement from taking mass action next week, the King has decreed that because the new trade union federation does not have official recognition, it in fact does not exist, and if it does not exist, it cannot take mass action next week!

Before someone calls the Kings physician, the democracy movement including the trade unions, are preparing to give the King and all of his sycophantic advisors an indispensable birthday present, and that is, the gift of a reality check! Whatever intellectual somersaults the King and his misguided advisors perform in order to justify their chronic misrule, next week,

they will be able to see, with their own eyes, that not only does TUCOSWA exist, but that when it joins hands with the rest of civil society, with students, faith based organisations, womens groups and community organisations, it will present an unstoppable and inspiring living example of democracy in action. That must be the very best gift that a deluded multimillionaire Monarch can receive, irrefutable evidence that it is time to step aside, and make way for the people of Swaziland to govern themselves.

Support the April 11 – 14 mobilisations for democracy!

Long live the SUDF and all those fighting for a democratic Swaziland!

Long live TUCOSWA Here at Last and Here to Stay!

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