



# COSATU

CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

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## Statement on the Global Week of Action on Swaziland 6-10 September 2021

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has been observing and actively engaging with the tragic developments in Swaziland, notably in the past 3 months. But fact being that it has been happening since the royal state of emergency in 1973 which turned Swaziland into one big political prison for all its people.

COSATU condemns the normalization of brutal force by the state police against unarmed civilians of eSwatini. We are totally outraged by the more than 74 lives lost, several hundreds injured and more than 700 jailed for standing up for democracy, in just a space of 3 months.

COSATU has consistently stood in solidarity with the people of Swaziland, being with them in the trenches when it was not fashionable to do so, as we spoke out decisively against the despotism of the monarchy. At first it was alleged that COSATU does not speak for anyone in Swaziland, even though invited by the progressive forces and workers to offer solidarity. Recent events have only served to confirm the truth that the people of Swaziland have long been demanding democracy and justice.

We can only affirm that consistent and humble contribution has served to inspire the people to confidently reject oppression, systemic violence and abuse of power, hence taking the struggle in their own hands.

For that reason, we wish to outline a plan of action for the week of the 6th – 10th September, 2021. This week coincides with the day during which Eswatini elites celebrate “Independence Day”. But activists around the world recognize it as the global week of action on Swaziland (GWOAS).

It is the week we mark to expose the cruelty and social disparities affecting ordinary Swazis. The GWOAS came into being in 2010 through the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) a concept of COSATU and its affiliates, working together with progressive forces from both within Swaziland, South Africa and other parts of the world that support the struggle of the Swazi People. Notably, COSATU is in discussion to revive the SDC to carry forward the work of actively coordinating active and sustained solidarity work on Swaziland.

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Since the beginning of the latest uprising in eSwatini in June 2021, we have been horrified by the amount of real evidence, through videos and personal testimonies of people injured and murdered by the state police and military forces ordered by Mswati.

We have further witnessed constant harassment, threats and assaults of activists and their families. We could not but ask ourselves, what order can be restored by killing innocent civilians for demanding human rights, justice and dignity? This begs another question, what does independence mean for an ordinary citizen of eSwatini who is not a Dlamini or related to the ruling Dlamini dynasty?

For the first time we are witnessing a new era that brings together different generations under the same banner of calling for democratic change and reform in Swaziland. The young and the old, men and women collectively demanding change. This has shown an even bigger awakening that has made the people speak in one voice as they seek justice on the glaring socio-economic conditions that can only be resolved through real change of the whole governance system in eSwatini.

Through the GWoAS campaign, COSATU seeks to carry forward the work left by the fallen giants of the Swazi struggle, such Mario Masuku, Jan Sithole and others who died demanding democracy and people's power through; the unbanning of political parties, the release of all political prisoners, towards an inclusive political dialogue, a transitional authority and a new democratic constitution for the country.

We wish to further emphasise our demand for the release of all political prisoners, including our dear stalwart and brave soldier Amos Mbedzi, who is a prisoner of conscience and has become very ill, subjected to very inhumane and cruel torture, denied medical care and other rights as a human being. Together with the bold and brave members of parliament who are in jail and another in exile, deserve our full and unconditional support.

We once again, call on King Mswati III to stop being in denial, self-centred and arrogant, but recognize the urgency for earnest and robust dialogue between himself and the people of Swaziland that will drive the process of change. History has taught us that it never ends well for despotic leaders when they refuse basic rights for their people. Fortunately, all evidence confirms that the will of the people always triumph.

In this regard, as COSATU, working together with our sister federations in the region and beyond will embark in a week long activities as a show of solidarity and mobilization of support across the world for change in response to the call by the people of Swaziland.

### **The Programme of action**

The Global Week of Action Programme is as follows:

#### **1. 6 September**

- Meetings/Petitions at all Tinkhundla Centers in the morning.
- Progressive Democratic Formation in Swaziland to be on the ground conducting a listening campaigns and community meetings
  
- In the afternoon 2 virtual seminars
  - one organized by COSATU to feature speakers from South Africa, International Trade Union Movement and Swaziland Democratic Forces.



- Second organized by United Eswatini Diaspora which will feature speakers from all over the world.
- 2. 7th September
  - Two virtual seminars or discussions.
    - 1st Young workers from South Africa and Swaziland Dialogue.
    - 2nd Memorial Service for the victims of Mswati massacre speakers will include Political Leaders, relatives of deceased comrades, comrades injured and relatives for those still in jail including MPS.
- 3. 8th September
  - Meeting for all stakeholders in KZN with the COSATU PEC
- 4. 9th September
  - 3 Boarder blockades
    - 2 borders in Mpumalanga namely Matsamo (Jeppes Reef), Ngwenya (Oshoek),
    - 1 Boarder in KZN namely Lavumisa (Golela).

COSATU, its affiliates and friend remain committed to support the demands of the Swazi people to achieve a democratic dispensation that will be designed and in the interest of the people and not a royal minority and their friends.

**Issued by COSATU**

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