

Ayuba Wabba

President
Président
Präsident
Presidente

His Excellency Cleopas Siphos Dlamini
Prime Minister of Eswatini
Cabinet Offices
Hospital Hill
Mbabane
Eswatini
By email

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
Generalsekretärin
Secretaria General

HTUR/ZM

26 October 2021

ITUC condemns state repression against protesting public service workers in the Kingdom of Eswatini

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 200 million workers in 164 countries and territories around the world, I would like to condemn the recurring surge in violence and repression against peaceful protesters by the security forces in your country.

The ITUC is reliably informed that on 20 October 2021, your security forces brutally attacked protesting public service workers who intended to hand over a petition to your government raising issues about their deteriorating working conditions. Prior to the protest day, on 18 October 2021, the petitioners had obtained authority from the City Council of Mbabane as provided for in the Public Order Act of 2007. This authority was then overturned by the commissioner of police the following day without any consultation with the petitioners.

We are also shocked to learn that police fired tear gas canisters in a bus full of passengers, causing serious injuries to the people. The police also mounted roadblocks and attacked protesters. Following these incidents, about 30 workers were seriously injured and hospitalised while one person died as a result.

Mr Prime Minister, this brutal incident follows another one that occurred in July 2021, which we have condemned through our letter of 20 July 2021. We call upon your government to uphold international norms that protect the right to freedom of association and assembly and ensure that workers and the people of Eswatini enjoy those rights, protected by international conventions that your country has freely ratified.

We reiterate our call for your government to take steps to address the grievances of the people of Eswatini and engage in constructive dialogue. You must take urgent steps to address the following demands:

- a) end the ongoing intimidation, threats of arrests, raids and unprovoked brutal beatings of workers and members of the public by the police, soldiers and agents of the government;
- b) release all protesters under the detention of the army and the police;
- c) initiate an independent investigation under UN supervision to find the murderers of the people and assure that those found in the wrong face the law;
- d) unban political parties to pave the way for a political negotiated settlement; and

- e) commit formally to a negotiated political reform process involving Eswatini civil society, political parties and trade unions.

We hope and trust that your government will take the necessary measures, without further delay, to establish a democratic state and respect human rights. We will continue to closely monitor the human and trade union rights situation in Eswatini and take further appropriate steps, as required, to support workers in their legitimate struggle for rights.

I look forward to your response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B.' followed by a stylized flourish.

General Secretary

cc: UN Human Rights

cc: African Union Commission

cc: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

cc: Acting Minister of Labour Pholile Dlamini-Shakantu

cc: Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)