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Date:

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Your Highness,

Independence Day: a call for the establishment of full democratic, human and trade union rights in Swaziland

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO-Norway), representing 860 000 Norwegian workers, is writing to you on the occasion of the anniversary of the independence of your country.

While this should be a reason for all Swazi citizens to celebrate and look at the gains since having obtained freedom from colonial rule, the picture for Swaziland unfortunately looks rather dim. Swaziland is a signatory to the African Union's Charter on Human and People's Rights, to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Core conventions, to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines on Democratic Elections, as well as to other bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for the promotion of democracy and Human Rights. Nevertheless, the rights your country has pledged to respect, protect and promote, are constantly being violated and trampled on.

Unfortunately, everyday reality in Swaziland is marked by arbitrary arrests, torture and deaths in detention, extra-judicial killings, the lack of judicial representation, threats and intimidation of trade unionists and activists and their families, and the hooding into exile of many Swazis as a consequence of this climate of terror.

LO-Norway notes that since 1973 the Kingdom of Swaziland has been under what's possibly the longest state of emergency in the world. Since that day, political parties are banned, as well as the rights of workers to assemble unless authorized by the Police; a 60 day detention without trial was introduced, and all powers (legislative, judiciary and executive) were vested unto the King's Office which to date reigns and rules, appoints the Prime Minister, the entire

cabinet, all envoys, 66% of the members of the House of Senate, 20% of the members of the House of Assembly, the entire House of Chiefs, all Commissioners, all Regional Administrators, all Judges, all Public Commissions and all advisers.

The widely contested Suppression of Terrorism Act has been used to further suppress legitimate dissent. Certain political parties have been proscribed and one of their leaders has been in prison without charges since October 2008. The suspicious death in detention of Siphho Jele, a trade union leader and activist, after this year's violently interrupted May Day celebrations at the Salesian Sports grounds in Manzini, has drawn loud and wide condemnation by the global trade union community.

To the International Labour Movement, it is shocking that democratic values and labour rights, basic features of a free and just society, are so excessively ignored, squashed and violated in Swaziland. We therefore strongly urge you to put an end to this situation and create the conditions for an environment which is conducive to the full and free exercise of democratic and trade union rights. We stand by our Swazi Brothers and Sisters in supporting their legitimate struggle for these rights.

LO-Norway therefore demands:

- guarantees for a genuine and transparent constitutional reform
- multiparty democracy, with a true separation of powers
- the full implementation of ILO working standards in full consultation and participation of trade unions

To continue to press for the realization of these demands, we are joining workers from all over the world, in staging Solidarity Actions in support of our brothers and sisters in Swaziland. We hope you will not fail to see the importance of this signal and will seize the opportunity to end the oppression of our fellow workers' rights.

Yours sincerely

THE NORWEGIAN CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS



Roar Flåthen
President



Karin Beate Theodorsen
Head of International Department

Cc: The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Royal Norwegian Embassy, Maputo
The Royal Norwegian Embassy, Pretoria
International Confederation of Trade Unions
Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions