Cleopas Sipho Dlamini
Prime Minister
Cabinet Offices
Hospital Hill
Mbabane
Eswatini
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6 August 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

State repression against protesters

On behalf of the Australian trade union movement, we condemn the recent surge in violence and repression against peaceful protesters by the security forces in your country.

We have been following the developments in your country and understand that the protests that started on 26 June 2021 were caused by your government's decision to ban delivery of petitions by protesters. The petitioners are demanding a constitutionally established democracy in which the people elect their government representatives in full freedom. Mass protests calling for democracy have persistently arisen since the promulgation of the 1973 decree that banned political parties. We believe that they will continue as long as your government does not respond to the will of the people.

We are also shocked to be informed that your security forces have killed at least 71 people and injured many others. Furthermore, your security forces continue to use brutal force against citizens who are conducting their business. Several people who have been injured by the security forces are not receiving any assistance from your Government. In addition to the above, thousands of workers are not able to report for duty as a consequence of the violent crackdown against peaceful protesters. We are extremely concerned that, in the absence of any social or employment protection, these workers are likely to lose their incomes without any compensation from your Government, resulting in abject poverty faced by thousands of poor households.

We demand an end to the ongoing intimidation, threats of arrests, raids, unprovoked brutal beatings of members of the public by the police, soldiers and agents of your Government, the release of all protesters under the detention of the army and the police, an independent investigation under the supervision of the United Nations into the murders and for those found in the wrong to face the law, the unbanning of political parties to pave way for a political negotiated settlement and a signed formal commitment by the Government to a negotiated political reform process with eSwatini civil society and political parties.

We call upon the United Nations, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to facilitate, as soon as possible, the transition to democracy and ensure the investigation of the atrocities that have been committed so far and take measures to prevent further human rights violations.

We hope and trust that your Government will take the necessary measures to establish a democratic state without further delay, and I look forward to your response to this letter. We are writing to the Australian Government to urge them to press you to take the actions outlined above, and hereby copy this letter to the organisations listed below.

Yours sincerely

Michele O'Neil
President
ACTU

CC:
United Nations Human Rights Council: InfoDesk@ohchr.org
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association: civilsociety@ohchr.org
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