

ITUC Online

Swaziland: Dozens Arrested at Peaceful Democracy Assembly

Brussels, 6 September 2010 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned the arrest of as many as 50 pro-democracy campaigners by the Swaziland police today, and called on Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini to cease harassment and detention of trade union and civil society representatives opposed to the unilateral rule of the country's autocratic King Mswati.

Heavily-armed police broke up a peaceful democracy meeting at the Tum's George Hotel in Manzini, rushing into the meeting room and arrested as many as 50 of the participants, including Swazi and South African trade union leaders. Those arrested were later released from detention at the Manzini police station.

"Yet again the Swazi authorities have shown their contempt for even the most basic democratic standards, and their determination to keep the people of the country under the total control of the monarchy. Swaziland's regional neighbours, and countries everywhere need to make King Mswati and the elite which runs Swaziland as a feudal dictatorship understand that they must accept the will of the people for real constitutional reform and democracy," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC will also be raising this latest rights violation with the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO). Swaziland has been repeatedly criticised by the ILO for violations of trade union rights.

Those arrested today include leaders of the Swaziland trade union movement including Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) National Organiser Fundizwi Sifundza, Swaziland Amalgamated Trade Unions (SATU) General Secretary Frank Mncina, and representatives of the South African trade union movement, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) National Campaigns Coordinator George Mahlangu, COSATU Deputy International Secretary Sikelela Dlamini, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) Deputy President Christine Olivier, and the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) International Secretary Steve Faulkner.

Solidarity actions to support Swazi democracy will take place in a number of countries on 7 September, following a call by the ITUC, its affiliates in the region, and a range of civil society groups.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 301 national affiliates. For more information, contact press@ituc-csi.org <<mailto:press@ituc-csi.org>> , or call +32 2 224 0210.

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