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Swaziland: Democracy Protests Meet Violent Reaction from Regime

Brussels, 12 April 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Widespread pro-democracy protests across Swaziland have met with a violent reaction by the security forces of King Mswati today, with leaders of the country's trade union movement amongst the many detained. Barnes Dlamini, President of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary General of the Swaziland Federation of Labour were, along with several other union leaders, amongst the hundreds detained. Heavily armed police and military are occupying the capital Manzini and other key centres, teargas is being used against protestors, and there are reports that security forces have been firing live ammunition.

“King Mswati and his small clique of cronies have massively enriched themselves over the years, while the Swazi people have been impoverished by this feudal regime. Now they seek to cling to power using violence and intimidation, against the overwhelming will of the people. Swaziland has suffered enough – the international community must act with resolve and determination to see that justice is done and dictatorship is replaced by democracy,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

ITUC South African affiliate COSATU, long a supporter of the Swaziland union movement and civil society demand for democracy, organised demonstrations against the Mswati regime on the border between the two countries today, and has pledged to continue to stand by the democracy movement.

“Trade unions across the world are appalled at this latest example of a dictatorship resorting to repression and violence, and will maintain their solidarity with the Swazi movement for democracy and human rights,” said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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