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Swaziland: International Pressure Brings Early Release of Political Prisoners

Brussels, 30 June 2015 (ITUC OnLine): Swazi human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko and journalist Bheki Makhubu are being released from prison in Swaziland two weeks before the end of their sentences for criticising the lack of independence of the judiciary, following sustained international pressure. Maseko had been put into solitary confinement after the publication of a prison letter marking the one-year anniversary of his detention. Their release was ordered after Swaziland's Supreme Court overturned the judgement against them.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "We are glad that the human rights supporters can now be reunited with their families and friends, after their disgraceful imprisonment for doing nothing more than telling the truth. Their release just a couple of weeks before the end of their prison sentences should not be seen as a sign of progress in Swaziland. International pressure has helped get them released early, and needs to be sustained to bring about respect for fundamental rights in Swaziland, which is one of the worst countries for violations against workers' rights."

Maseko, who was the lawyer for trade union centre TUCOSWA when it was fighting for registration by the government, endured particularly harsh conditions whilst in prison. He still faces sedition charges under the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act for a May Day speech he gave in 2009.

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ITUC Index: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-rights-index-names>
Labourstart: <http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/newsquery2.pl?searchtext=swaziland&number=1000&language=en&Go=Go>

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