

Extrait du Libération Afrique

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Swazi Regime Starts to Unravel: The Democratic Movement Gathers Pace!

- Pays - Swaziland -

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Libération Afrique

Once again the Trade Union Movement has taken the lead in pushing forward the democratic agenda in Swaziland. The protests that have unfolded this week, starting on June 22 led by the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, and joined by the Swaziland Federation of Labour and the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (soon to be merged into a single federation) have shown the crucial role of organised labour in challenging the regime.

Despite ruthless waves of repression over the last period, both in terms of draconian legislation and through the brutal activities of a bloated security apparatus, Swaziland comrades have refused to bow their heads. Workers, students, social movement activists and those from faith based organisations have maintained their organisational cohesion. They are deepening their reach into rural and less organised layers, and most importantly, they have courageously placed themselves at the service of the mass movement calling for an end to the corrupt and grossly inefficient Tinkhundla regime. In the face of the desperate antics of the regime, there is a coming together of still broader layers of activists, emboldened by the trade union movement, and many of them entering mass organisation for the first time, and still others who have been cautious about committing themselves to mass action.

And there are important lessons here for all those willing to support the democracy struggle in Swaziland. Drawing upon the experiences of the anti-apartheid movement and more recently, the momentous upheavals in Egypt and elsewhere, a key lesson is this, the revolution will not be imported! The revolution in Swaziland will be created, lead and developed by the people of Swaziland themselves. That is why; all those in solidarity with the democracy struggle must do all that they can to build the organisations on the ground. To respect their assessment of the balance of forces, and through a positive engagement, ensure that their solidarity activity complements their activity in Swaziland itself. It is this approach that guides the work of the SDC, and which is helping to strengthen the democratic movement.

Defend Those on the Frontline! Free All Prisoners, Drop the Phoney Charges!

As the excellent Special Assignment episode on Swaziland indicated, there are many comrades languishing in the rotten prisons cells of the regime. The programme exposed how Maxwell Dlamini, Musa Ngubeni, Zonke Dlamini, Bheki Dlamini and Amos Mbedzi are all being held, in appalling conditions, without access to their loved ones, or unhindered legal representation. Last week, well known SDC activist Mancoba Nxumalo was arrested and charged under the notorious Prisons Act, reputedly for helping to facilitate parts of the Special Assignment programme. After word of his arrest spread across the world, he was released, but faces very serious charges.

Clearly, the continuing detention of comrades and the charges being faced by others is designed to intimidate the popular movement, but the reverse is happening. The campaign for the release of all of these comrades, and for the dropping of the ludicrous charges against all activists is a priority, and we call upon all those who can, to politically and financially contribute to the legal defence of these comrades.

No Financial Bail-Out Without Democratic Control!

The continuing financial crisis in Swaziland has thrown into sharp relief the economic mismanagement and chronic corruption that has characterised the regime to date. This is a regime that has squandered and stolen the nations resources, and is now reduced to going with a begging bowl to South Africa having been rejected by even the conservative forces of the IMF and World Bank. This is a golden opportunity for South Africa and the rest of the region to put SADC good governance protocols into practice, and to listen, not to those who have misused and stolen resources, but to those on the ground who are leading the struggle for democracy, and who have shown by their

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sacrifice that they are the future of Swaziland. That is why we say don't be fooled by the empty promises of Mswati.

As SNAT and others have stated, there is a need to make it absolutely clear that only when there is an open and transparent democratic process in place that has been arrived at with the direct involvement and support of the democratic movement can any moves towards economic development take place. To do otherwise would be to entrench the very reactionary forces that have created the crisis, and who discredit our continent by their dictatorial rule. The people of Swaziland deserve to be heard; they no longer can or should carry the economic and social burden of a wasteful and arrogant regime. There can be no development without democracy.

Escalate Solidarity!

In the coming weeks, the democratic movement will be escalating its activities, culminating in a repeat of the pioneering Global Week of Action that took place last year. All over the world, SDC chapters and solidarity organisations are planning to show their support for the democracy campaign. Many will once again, embrace the invitation of the democratic movement to travel to Swaziland to be part of the protest movement, and show their solidarity in practical terms. They know that there might be mass arrests once again, but taking their lead from the courage and determination of comrades inside the country, they will refuse to be intimidated.

It is now a year since the state murder of Comrade Siphon Jele. Actions to remember this fine comrade, and to call for the release of existing detainees and to accelerate the struggle for a democratic Swaziland are imminent. The SDC calls upon all supporters to join in these actions, and remember those who have paid the ultimate price, in the hope that we prevent any further barbaric acts.

The illegitimate Mswati regime does not have any mandate to govern Swaziland, or to prevent the legitimate protest actions of the democratic majority. The South African Government must not undermine the democratic movement, not least because it owes its own existence to the democratic mass struggle of its own people. The crisis in Swaziland is posing the question ever more sharply of who has the right to govern. Any attempt to bail out the despotic regime will be a slap in the face to democratic struggle everywhere, and will forever sully the reputation of those who seek to protect Africa's last surviving absolute monarchy.

In addition to the SDC Chapter in Swaziland, there are now SDC Chapters in Joburg, Cape Town and Durban, and plans to establish one in each Province. Don't wait, get involved!

**Support the democratic movement!
Isolate the Mswati regime!**

Build SDC Chapters!

Action speaks louder than words!

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