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| Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP Secretary of State Foreign & Commonwealth Office King Charles Street London SW1A 2AH | our ref swaziland/fog/ot/wp  date: 9 October 2014  contact: Owen Tudor  direct line: +44 (20) 7467 1325  email: otudor@tuc.org.uk |

Dear Philip

Mario Masuku and Maxwell Dlamini: Swaziland

We are deeply concerned about the rapid erosion of Swaziland’s already limited human and political rights. Democracy and basic rights have long been denied, but the government is responding to its critics in an increasingly brutal manner.

We are particularly worried about the health of Mario Masuku, President of the banned political party, the People’s United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO). Mario is being detained in poor conditions, which is having a detrimental impact on his health. We understand that he has contracted pneumonia, but is being denied adequate medical attention by the authorities.

Mario is currently being held in Zakhele Remand Centre, along with Maxwell Dlamini, Secretary General of the Swaziland Youth Congress. Both were denied bail after they were charged under the Suppression of Terrorism Act for saying “Viva PUDEMO” and criticising Swaziland’s undemocratic system of government at a May Day rally.

This is the latest in a long line of human rights violations by the government of Swaziland:

* in April seven individuals were arrested and charged with acts of terrorism for wearing political t-shirts;
* in July human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko and magazine editor Bheki Makubu were jailed for two years for contempt of court, for writing articles critical of the Chief Justice; and
* in August Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini told parliament that two union leaders who had attended the African Summit in Washington DC should be strangled for criticising the government: we know you expressed concern about this yourself.

We urge the British government to call for the immediate unconditional release of Mario Masuku and Maxwell Dlamini and all political prisoners and ensure that they face no further harm to their health or wellbeing whilst in prison.

Yours sincerely

**FRANCES O’GRADY**

**TUC General Secretary**

**as well as**

**KATE ALLEN, Amnesty International UK**

**HENRY BELLINGHAM MP**

**IAN BIRRELL, journalist**

**TONY DYKES, ACTSA**

**MIKE GAPES MP**

**RICHARD E GRANT, actor**

**LORD JONES of Cheltenham**

**BARONESS KINNOCK of Holyhead**

**TONI PEARCE, NUS President**

**PURNA SEN, Deputy Director, LSE Institute of Public Affairs and former Head of Human Rights, Commonwealth Secretariat**