

HE Mr Christian Muzie Nkambule
Kingdom of Swaziland High Commission
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Dear High Commissioner

TUC condemns police violence against peaceful trade union demonstration

As the British affiliate of the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents over 207 million workers in 163 countries and territories - including Swaziland – the Trades Union Congress strongly condemns the brutality of police violence used against peaceful demonstrators on 29 June.

The peaceful demonstration, organised by the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA), had the objective of delivering a petition to the Deputy Prime Minister's office, to raise a number of legitimate trade union demands, including the introduction of minimum wage, amendments to the employment act, banning of replacement of labour during strike action, and banning of labour brokers, as well as demanding to end abuses of small sugarcane workers.

The City Council of Mbabane refused access to the main streets to demonstrators, and the police prevented them from reaching the Deputy Prime Minister's office by using water cannon and wielding batons and tear gas canisters and attacked demonstrators with batons. Four members of TUCOSWA were severely injured and taken to the hospital, while one member was taken by the police for questioning and later released.

We strongly denounce the excessive brutality used to break up the peaceful demonstration and we remind you that such violence is a stark violation of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organise which your government has ratified. We recall that fundamental trade union rights include the right to organise public demonstrations. The use of national security forces during trade union demonstrations should be limited to cases of genuine necessity, and restrictions imposed on peaceful assemblies must be in line with international human rights standards (A/HRC/ 31/66).

We urge you to call on the government of the Kingdom of eSwatini to put in place measures for the protection of public events and demonstrations, as already

recommended by the observations of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/SWZ/CO/I), and to fully align the Public Order Act with the provisions of ILO Convention No.87, and to follow the Code of Conduct developed with the assistance of the ILO.

Yours sincerely

FRANCES O'GRADY
General Secretary