



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2023)0049

The situation of human rights defenders in Eswatini, notably the murder of Thulani Maseko

European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2023 on the situation of human rights defenders in Eswatini, notably the murder of Thulani Maseko (2023/2551(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in Eswatini, the last absolute monarchy in Africa, human rights and fundamental freedoms are curtailed and political parties are outlawed;
- B. whereas on 21 January 2023, Thulani Maseko, a prominent human rights and trade union lawyer and chairman of Eswatini pro-democracy organisation the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, renowned for his efforts in advancing democracy, the rule of law, good governance and human rights, was killed at his home just hours after King Mswati III made threats against members of Eswatini's pro-democracy movement;
- C. whereas in 2021, protests demanding democratic reforms began and the King's government launched a brutal crackdown on human rights activism, retaliating with arbitrary detentions, harassment, threats and abductions, internet shutdowns and bans on protests; whereas several dozen people have been killed by the security forces; whereas mercenaries have allegedly been hired to repress growing dissent;
- D. whereas Members of the Eswatini Parliament Mthandeni Dube and Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza have been in jail since July 2021;
- E. whereas the security forces systematically intimidate trade unionists and violate fundamental workers' rights; whereas the authorities have detained and allegedly tortured student union leaders; whereas other human rights problems in Eswatini include impunity for the security forces and discrimination against women and minorities;

1. Strongly condemns the killing of Thulani Maseko;
2. Calls for a prompt, independent, impartial, transparent and thorough investigation, under the auspices of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the UN, into the attacks against other pro-democracy and human rights activists and the alleged recruitment of mercenaries to help security forces repress opposition;
3. Condemns the widespread human rights violations in Eswatini and calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners – particularly MPs Mthandeni Dube and Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza – and an immediate end to the harassment, violence and pressure exercised against human rights defenders, trade unionists, pro-democracy activists and politicians;
4. Urges the authorities in Eswatini to respect, promote and protect human rights, including the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and to allow the people of Eswatini to exercise their civil and political rights;
5. Considers the imprisonment of politicians and human rights defenders and the banning of trade unions to be clear contraventions of Eswatini's commitments under the Cotonou Agreement; stresses that the country's authorities must respect the principles of the International Labour Organization;
6. Urges the authorities in Eswatini to respect their commitments and launch, without delay, a comprehensive dialogue with all affected stakeholders to work towards national reconciliation and the protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, with the ultimate goal of lasting peace, mediated and supported by the Southern African Development Community;
7. Calls for the EU to review and, where applicable, suspend support programmes for Eswatini where funds risk being used for activities that violate human rights;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and to the Kingdom of Eswatini.