

## **Background**

The Kingdom of Eswatini, with a population of less than 1.1 million residents, is in a [state of civil unrest](#). On the 19th of June 2021, thousands of youth from all over the country staged a peaceful protest calling for an end to state sanctioned violence in the form of police brutality and military suppression as well as pro-democratic political reforms, including the right to form political parties, and elect their government representatives. As part of the reforms, the youth, together with elected members of parliament (MPs), demanded a democratically elected Prime Minister with executive authority, and Members of Parliament to represent them. Instead, they were met with state sanctioned violence in the form of police brutality and military suppression - an all too familiar government response to calls for an end to eSwatini's autocratic governance. Since June 19th, these protests have spread across Eswatini to the industrial areas of Matsapha and as far as the Maloma mines in rural Lubulini.

Protesters have been met by violence and coercion by the state including live ammunition and teargas by the Royal Eswatini Police Service and the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force. As of June 29th 2021, the government of Eswatini has banned the delivery of petitions by the people of Eswatini to representatives within the Tinkhundla system. Instead, the Acting Prime Minister instructed the public to send their grievances to a non-working email ([petitions@gov.sz](mailto:petitions@gov.sz)). The government has additionally directed national telecommunications agencies to suspend their services, shutdown fuel supplies, and enforced a national curfew including the closure of businesses, schools and all civil activities from 6PM to 5AM daily. On the ground, the army and the police have been deployed - they are shooting, maiming and killing unarmed citizens. Several protesters including children have been detained, injured and murdered as unarmed civilians are met by military and armed forces. People are currently running out of food supplies, and other essentials as shops have been burnt down.

Eswatini is Africa's last absolute monarchy. Political parties were banned in 1973 and the Kingdom's 2005 constitution forbids political parties from participating in elections. HMK Mswati III currently appoints the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, and senior members of the parliament and the judiciary in the Kingdom. The protests of the last several weeks have proven that amid rising inequality, unemployment and failing state infrastructure exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the system of governance in Eswatini is untenable to a significant portion of its citizens. They have also shown the unrelenting and immutable spirit of young people seeking justice, representation and equitable access to the entitlements which their citizenship should allow.

## **Appeal**

emaSwati in the Kingdom, emaSwati in the Diaspora, anti-oppression movements and civil society groups, call on the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini to:

1. Immediately cease the use of violence against peaceful pro-democracy protests
2. Decommission and disarm security forces accused of injuring/killing protestors including 140 injured civilians and an estimated 40 Swazis murdered

3. Reinstate telecommunications and internet services in the Kingdom including Swazi MTN
4. Engage in democratic negotiation and discussion with Pro Democracy groups including pro-democracy MPs, the Political Parties Assembly and the Swaziland National Students Union
5. Launch an independent investigation into allegations of corruption, embezzlement and other economic crimes against senior members of the government of Eswatini
6. Ensure that the government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, and the United Nations implement, monitor and respect the human rights of those engaged in pro democratic protests.

The Society emaSwati in the Kingdom, emaSwati in the Diaspora, anti-oppression movements and civil society groups condemns the state sanctioned violence with which the government of Eswatini is meeting legitimate forms of protests by its people, many young people among them, and their calls for democratic reforms in the country. We stand in solidarity with those engaged in peaceful protests and demonstrations for a democratic and representative Kingdom.

Today, the eyes of the world are fixed on the Kingdom of Eswatini. We call upon the individuals in positions of power including foreign missions, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and Regional Bodies to seek and prioritize a peaceful and just resolution of the civil unrest which has gripped the nation at its heart .