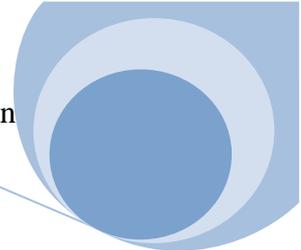


As seen through  
the pages of  
Swazi Media  
Commentary

# The End of the Beginning? 2011, a year in the struggle for freedom in Swaziland



by Richard Rooney



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By Richard Rooney

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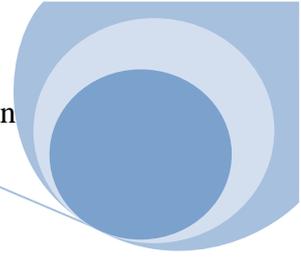
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## About the Author

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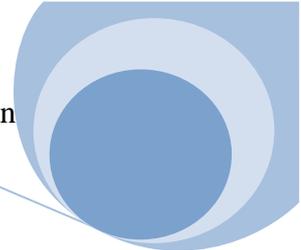
Richard Rooney was associate professor at the University of Swaziland 2005 – 2008, where he was also head of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department.

He has taught in universities in Africa, Europe and the Pacific. His academic research has appeared in books and journals across the world. He specialises in media and democracy, governance and human rights.

His journalism has appeared in newspapers and magazines across the world. He was a full-time journalist in his native United Kingdom for 10 years, before becoming an academic.

He has published the blog Swazi Media Commentary since 2007 and also has social network sites that concentrate on human rights issues in Swaziland.

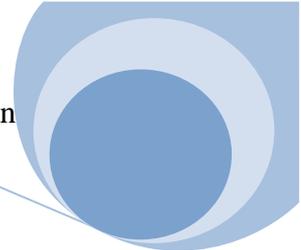
He holds a Ph.D in Communication from the University of Westminster, London, UK. He presently teaches at the University of Botswana, Gaborone.



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## Introduction

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Tuesday April 12 2011 may yet go down in history as a watershed in the struggle for freedom in Swaziland. To borrow the words of Winston Churchill, it might not have been the day that the struggle for freedom in Swaziland ended in victory for the people. It might not even have been the beginning of the end. But it was, perhaps, the end of the beginning. After this day things would never be quite the same again in Swaziland.

It was on April 12 that Swaziland saw its biggest demonstration in living memory. It was to be the start of three days of protests across the tiny kingdom in southern Africa. Ordinary Swazis were fed up with the regime of King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch. They'd had enough of being denied their basic human and civil rights and were ready to fight for their freedom. They wanted an end to the corruption of the King and the governments he appoints. They wanted the freedom to meet, to demonstrate, to form political parties and to choose their own government – all things denied to them by the King.

A group of people, unaffiliated with any of the existing political parties or lobby groups, created a Facebook site and called it the April 12 Swazi Uprising. April 12 was the day in 1973 that King Sobhuza II, the father of the present King, tore up the country's constitution and began to rule by decree. Despite the signing into law of a new constitution in 2006, people in the kingdom still live under the yoke of that decree.

The April 12 group caught attention in Swaziland and across the globe. It called for an uprising to start on April 12 2011 and soon prodemocracy activists, trade unionists, journalists and progressives from all over the world were watching the kingdom.

Swaziland had seen many street protests before, but this one was to be different. This was meant to be the beginning of the end.

This one was also to be the first to be played out on the Internet. Members of the April 12 group claimed they were a real on-the-ground organisation with at least three full time organisers. Perhaps they were, but mostly their battle was fought in cyberspace using social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and blogsites.

This meant the protest could be followed by anyone, anywhere in the world. I wasn't in Swaziland in April. I was on the other side of the planet in an obscure country that officially doesn't exist. It was created nearly 40 years ago after a civil war in which one ethnic group tried to slaughter another. The country that was created as a result is today a 'rogue state'. Only one country in the entire world officially recognises its existence and it struggles on under economic, political and cultural embargoes.

But even here, with only a cheap laptop and a mobile Internet connection routed through another country, I was able to play my small part in the April 12 protests. I was not alone: people from all over the world were following the events – often in minute detail. I remember well in the evening of the second day a 'distress signal' coming out of Swaziland. Hundreds of protesters were trapped by armed police in the Swaziland National Association of

Teachers headquarters. Police had ordered everyone to get on the floor in readiness for a shoot-out. Deaths and severe casualties were expected.

The signal calling on the world to intervene by sending protests to governments worldwide was sent by Internet. Within seconds the message was flashing on computer screens across six continents. The Swaziland regime was truly in the spotlight that evening. The police, uncharacteristically for them, restrained themselves and the evening passed without the feared attack.

But by day-three the protests themselves had been savagely put down. The Swaziland state proved on this occasion to be more powerful than the protesters.

But the struggle for democracy in Swaziland continues. This book looks at what happened in 2011. It is compiled from the pages of Swazi Media Commentary, the blog that contains information and comment on the fight for human rights in Swaziland. The blogposts were written on a daily basis, often at some considerable speed. I have not edited them in any significant way for this volume, so they do not benefit from hindsight.

As well as the events of April 12, the book covers in much detail the massive meltdown of the Swazi economy, caused by the governments handpicked over the years by King Mswati; and also caused in no small part by the greed and corruption of the King himself and his close supporters.

The economic meltdown has sensitised many people in Swaziland to the need for root and branch political reform in the kingdom.

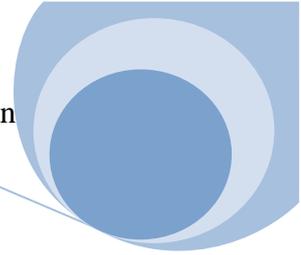
This book starts with a section on the April 12 Uprising which is followed by the account of the economy. There then follows separate chapters looking at events in each month of 2011. These events include many protests, including the Global Week of Action held in September. They also highlight the numerous violations of rights suffered by the poor, by children, by women and by sexual minorities, among others, in the kingdom.

The book is not a complete record of the year. For space considerations, much has been left out. Also, for copyright reasons, some things have had to be omitted. To read the whole week-by-week account of 2011 you can go to the Swazi Media Commentary blogsite itself ([www.swazimedia.blogspot.com](http://www.swazimedia.blogspot.com)).

Many thanks are due to all the people who have assisted me during the year with Swazi Media Commentary. I would like to publicly name them here, but if you are a reader of the blog you will understand why they must remain anonymous.

I take full responsibility for the contents of this book, including all errors of fact and of judgement.

*Richard Rooney  
December 2011*



# 1. The April 12 Uprising

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## **Facebook Call to Oust Swazi King**

*17 February 2011*

A group of ordinary Swazi people, unaffiliated with any of the known opposition groups in Swaziland, have used Facebook to call for mass protests on the streets of Mbabane and Manzini to force King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, to step down.

The group calling itself April 12 Swazi Uprising<sup>1</sup> says in its Facebook group description, 'It is the voice of the people on the streets who are sick and tired of the misrule by the Swazi regime and the snail pace and lack of action by Swaziland's so-called progressive. We pledge, as a group, to create in the next few months the biggest mass movement that the country has ever seen. 2011 will also mark the year when we will topple the royalist regime. Joining this group is a pledge that you will work tirelessly to make this a reality.'

The group calls itself the April 12 Swazi Uprising to mark the date in 1973 that the then king, Sobhuza II, tore up the constitution and began to rule by Royal Proclamation. The state of emergency he declared in 1973 is still, in effect, in place in Swaziland today. The group wants people to take to the streets in protest on 12 April 2011.

The April 12 Swazi Uprising group says it has three full time organizers based in the capital city, Mbabane.

It says, 'Their mandate is to take the idea to the people on the streets who are not keen facebookers. We are currently looking for people who will help in the hub.'

## **'Swazi Uprising Will Not Be Violent'**

*3 March 2011*

The Facebook group formed to 'topple' King Mswati III of Swaziland says it does not seek a violent overthrow.

It is just a group of 'ordinary citizens about to do a very important task in our country of birth', it says.

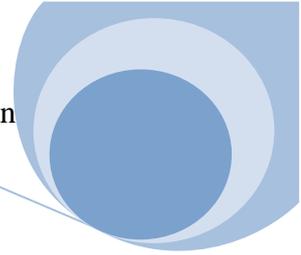
The April 12 Uprising group received international attention after it called on Swazi people to take to the streets.

But, it says, its intentions have been misrepresented, especially by the *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper.

In a statement, the April 12 Uprising said it wants prodemocracy groups to support its call. The Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) has given its backing, but the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCCO) has distanced itself from the movement.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_167326423312962#](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_167326423312962#)



The April 12 Uprising said it would go ahead with or without the support of other organisations.

The statement said, ‘We want to further clarify that our uprising is a popular mass demonstration which is founded upon the principles of non-violence as espoused by Martin Luther King and followed by the North African states who are currently liberating themselves from oppression. We do not possess any arms, Molotov cocktails or any military training. We are just ordinary citizens about to do a very important task in our country of birth.’

It went on, ‘It is therefore completely sensationalist for agencies like the *Times of Swaziland* to portray our uprising as being a violent one.’

The April 12 Uprising said, ‘No part of our group’s stated objectives mentions violence as a tactic. The truth is that any logical thinking person would know that no sane group would publicly declare a violent overthrow of its government and even state the date and venue for this.’

### **Swaziland MPs Fear Uprising**

*11 March 2011*

Swaziland MPs are getting fearful that there could be a revolution in the kingdom.

And some want the Swazi Government to monitor people to see if they are ready to revolt.

The political unrest in North Africa and the Middle East has sparked concerns that Swazis might follow suit and the existence of the April 12 Uprising Facebook site is seen as confirmation that something might happen.<sup>2</sup>

These fears emerged on Wednesday (9 March 2011) as parliament debated the third quarter report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The Press in Swaziland reported Marwick Khumalo MP saying it was important to know what people in the kingdom were saying about the uprisings.

‘What are the political vibes? Do they show that we won’t suffer the same fate as elsewhere?’ he asked.

‘People on the streets are talking about plots being made against the nation. I am not a sceptic but the talks are there. Should we relax or be concerned?’

He said people could be planning a revolution and the government must take a stand. If not he and other Swazis would gladly address the issue if assigned by government.

Khumalo said Internet communication should not be ignored. He believed the Egyptian uprising was orchestrated through the new media. Regarding similar calls for Swaziland he said, ‘We are ready to face them. We should be roped in as politicians if we have to say something.’

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<sup>2</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swazi-uprising-online-interview.html>

Khumalo said knowing about these things would help them devise ways on how to defend Swaziland. 'Some people who feel weak-kneed try to hide such things from the people, this should not be done instead we should take a stand,' he said.

Chief Nzameya MP also said that the conflicts in other countries were a cause for concern.

Gibson 'Cracker' Hlophe MP said, 'We do not want to find ourselves in an uncomfortable situation, there should be a department that is going to act on this now before things get out of hand.'

Siphiwe Kunene MP said Swaziland should be careful about statements it makes about countries that are currently experiencing political conflicts because when these are over, Swaziland would still want to maintain relations.

'I was shocked when I browsed through the Internet and found that an officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made negative comments about one of the countries. What would happen when the conflicts are over as we would still want to be associated with the countries? The ministry should have a way of monitoring officers,' she said.

Although she didn't say it out loud, she was referring to Clifford Mamba, Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who reportedly<sup>3</sup> made critical comments about the leadership style of Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi.

### **Scared Senate Counts Days to Uprising**

*23 March 2011*

Senators in Swaziland don't know what to do about the 'uprising' planned for 12 April.

The best they can come up with is to invite the 'organisers' to appear on state-controlled television and radio to tell what is on their minds.

The 'uprising' is being coordinated by a Facebook group called the April 12 Uprising. On its site it is very clear that its wish is to 'topple' King Mswati III.

Swazi senators discussed the 'uprising' yesterday (22 March 2011) and, according to media reports in Swaziland, they didn't know what the demands of the group were.

They don't know? Either the senators simply haven't done their homework (just go to the site)<sup>4</sup> or the newspapers are too scared to tell their readers that there are Swazi people who want to get rid of King Mswati.

The senators are assuming that the 'uprising' will consist of a march, but the exact activities for the day have not been disclosed by organisers. According to the *Swazi Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, they called on Magobetane Mamba, Minister of Labour and Social Security, to do something and quickly. There are only 20 days until the 'uprising', they said.

<sup>3</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/wikileaks-swazi-gaddafi-gaffe.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_167326423312962#](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_167326423312962#)

Senator Bhutana Dlamini asked, ‘... what has the minister done to engage those who intend to march to ensure that he gets their side of the story and see if anything could be done?’

Senator Themba Msibi, said, ‘As legislators, we need to know what you are doing pertaining the march that has become the talk of the day.’

The *Times of Swaziland*, the only independent newspaper in the kingdom, quoted him saying, ‘Will government deploy police or guard the whole country? What will happen?’

The Minister didn’t know what to do. ‘The big question is what exactly those perpetrating for the demonstration really want? We have written to them with a view of hearing what they want.’

All he could come up with was to suggest that the leaders of the ‘march’ could go on local radio and television where they would say what their demands were and give the chance to respond.

The *Times* quoted Mamba saying, ‘Let me ask those who are aggrieved to write to the ministry and tell us of their problems. We should not hear about news of the uprising in the media.’

So, what happens next? What is the point of the ‘uprising’ organisers talking to government when their demands are for King Mswati to go and for a new democratic system be put in his place in Swaziland?

Not much room for negotiations there.

### **Uprising Will ‘Occupy Mbabane’**

*27 March 2011*

The ‘uprising’ in Swaziland scheduled for 12 April 2011 will be an ‘an Egyptian-style occupation of Mbabane,’ according to a South African newspaper.

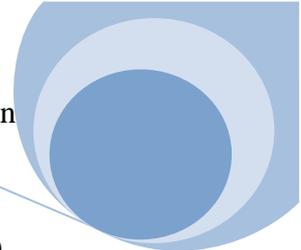
Until now, very little has been revealed about what is planned for the day. Swaziland government ministers have assumed the protest to ‘topple’ King Mswati III would be a mass march.

The *Mail and Guardian*, a Johannesburg-based newspaper, reported yesterday (26 March 2011), ‘Maxwell Dlamini<sup>5</sup>, president of the Swaziland National Union of Students, one of the few organisations to identify itself publicly with the April 12 campaign, which began anonymously on Facebook, said the plan was to stage “an Egyptian-style occupation of Mbabane”’.

“We chose this date because it was when our freedoms were taken away from us; now we want to have those freedoms back,” Dlamini said. “We’re planning the biggest demonstration possible and we’ll occupy the streets of Mbabane until our demands are met, this government resigns and we have democracy for the people of Swaziland.””

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<sup>5</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/will-students-spark-uprising.html>



The newspaper claimed that the April 12 Uprising (as the Facebook group calls itself) ‘appears to be steered from Johannesburg by the Swaziland Solidarity Network, which is run from the South African Communist Party’s offices’.

This prompted a response from the April 12 organising committee, which in a lengthy statement issued on its website yesterday, said the uprising group was unaffiliated. ‘Every Swazi, no matter his/her affiliation, is invited to the Swazi uprising,’ it said.

The statement went on to give background to the creation of the uprising group.

‘It is important that people understand where the feeling that this was an opportune time for mass demonstrations came from. Without a doubt the inspiration was from the dozen or more countries in the Arab world who decided that they had had enough of dictatorships.

‘Those countries had two things in common that observers regarded as the catalysts for the uprisings. The first was the long histories of dictatorship. There were instances where some rulers had been in power for over thirty years. Political and civil liberties were suppressed by most of these leaders and democracy was non-existent.

‘The second was the economic marginalisation of a majority of the population. With these two issues Swaziland was politically and economically a domino in line with the rest of these nations despite the fact that it was geographically far removed from the site of action.

‘It was inevitable that someone in Swaziland would imagine the possibility of a Tinkhundla free Swaziland via mass demonstrations. Having imagined it, it was easy for such an individual, or group, to then relay the message to the rest of the population.

‘That we came up with the initial plan does not make us heroes or celebrities. In days gone by, when cattle herders saw an impi (warriors) advancing, they simply made the battle call. There was nothing heroic in doing that. And after the war had been fought, they resumed their cattle herding duties.

‘The April 12 uprising was called because there was an urgent need for it, nothing more nothing less. In fact Swaziland had a more urgent reason for rising against the government and creating a democracy. Swazi people have very little to lose nowadays. Even new born children can see that the economy is in tatters and that the situation will get worse soon.

‘Due to the fact that people do not spontaneously organize themselves, the Swazi uprising committee was therefore formed, practically comprising three people. And their mandate was to kick start the process which would see to it that all Swazis joined the movement. It was further decided that due to the fact that the media is not only censored but in fact pro-monarchy, all forms of media that can reach the Swazi people should be used, hence the reliance on Facebook.

‘Knowing Swazi people, the Facebook group that was created had to state clearly that this group was unaffiliated. This was done deliberately to stop any group claiming to be behind it. It was also to ensure that all independent thinkers felt free to join without feeling that a particular party or movement would dominate its direction.

‘All political parties and civic organizations that were contacted and invited to take a leadership role have behaved very magnificently and they ought to be congratulated. Thanks to them, the independence of the movement has remained.’

### **Did Swazi PM Lie Over ‘Uprising’?**

*30 March 2011*

Was Swazi Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini telling the truth when he told senators that organisers of the 12 April ‘uprising’ have agreed to meet him to discuss ‘their concerns’?

The *Swazi Observer* reported Dlamini saying parliamentarians should not panic, stating that government was putting ears on the ground.

‘We are monitoring the situation closely and going to be having talks with those who are proposing the march about their concerns,’ he said.

Dlamini’s assertion that organisers of the uprising, that is being coordinated through a Facebook group, are ready to meet him may be wide of the mark.

Only last week, in response, to a previous government invitation for talks the April 12 organising committee said, ‘All that we can say as a committee organizing this historic peaceful mission is that the government of Swaziland knows what to do to avoid this uprising from occurring. We outlined our demands to them clearly. They must end this facade of a government once and for all and hand over power to a transition government elected by the Swazi people.’<sup>6</sup>

It added, ‘Most importantly, the king must vacate office immediately and go on vacation pending the finalization of the future role of the monarchy by the Swazi people.’

So, what more is there to discuss?

### **PM: Protests ‘Border on Treason’**

*2 April 2011*

Barnabas Dlamini has warned that anyone who calls for ‘regime change’ in the kingdom is bordering on ‘treason’.

He made the comments only days before the 12 April ‘uprising’ is due to take place. The Facebook group coordinating the uprising says it wants to ‘topple’ the royal regime in the kingdom ruled by King Mswati III.

Dlamini yesterday (1 April 2011) told media editors at a regular meeting that he refused to give in to protesters. He said he would ignore the mass protest of 18 March 2011 when an

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<sup>6</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/uprising-group-snubs-government.html>

estimated 8,000 people marched on his office demanding the resignation of the entire government.

The *Swazi News*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, quoted him saying, ‘As Swazis, we all know that some things cannot be granted when asked for. When we speak of regime change, we are speaking of a coup and that borders on treason. The petition says that Cabinet must resign and go home but we cannot just abandon our duties because we have a responsibility to serve those who elected and appointed us.’

He claimed untruthfully that ‘the people’ elected the cabinet, when in fact Dlamini was elected by nobody and appointed by the King, contrary to the provisions of the constitution.

Dlamini also claimed that his cabinet wasn’t responsible for the financial mess the kingdom was in today. He said that it was previous governments that were to blame. He said this even though Majozi Sithole, the Minister of Finance, has held his post for 10 years.

All of Dlamini’s assertions went unchallenged by the Swazi media today.

### **Swazi Unions Fear Police Raids**

*4 April 2011*

Labour unions and civic society organisations in Swaziland have placed themselves on alert after what is being described ‘as credible information’ was received that they are about to be raided by Swazi state authorities in an attempt to disrupt the ‘uprising’ scheduled for next Tuesday (12 April 2011).

King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, and the government he handpicks, have become increasingly worried about the ‘uprising’ that is being coordinated by a Facebook group.

Yesterday, it was revealed that Swazi government representatives had approached the crack South African organised crime police squad the Hawks to ask it to monitor the movements of the Swaziland Solidarity Network, a Johannesburg-based organisation that is one of the bodies publicly supporting the ‘uprising’. According to the *Sunday Times*, a South African newspaper, the Hawks refused.<sup>7</sup>

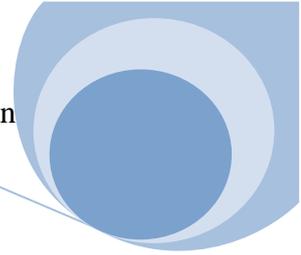
Today (4 April 2011), it became public that labour unions in Swaziland planned a three-day protest next week, starting on 12 April.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, an unconfirmed report is circulating that some foreign country ambassadors based in Swaziland approached King Mswati prior to the 18 March demonstrations that attracted about 8,000 people and warned him that if his state police or army caused violence during the protests there would be consequences from the international community.

Unusually for Swaziland, the protest which was demanding the immediate resignation of the entire government, passed peacefully.

<sup>7</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/king-seeks-aid-to-avert-overthrow.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/swazi-unions-march-for-three-days.html>



### **Swazi Unions March for Three Days**

*4 April 2011*

Swazi labour unions have raised the temperature ahead of the expected April 12 ‘uprising’ by announcing they plan to march on the streets of Swaziland for three consecutive days next week.

This means there will also be what amounts to a general strike, as the protest includes all major labour unions in the kingdom, including the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, the Swaziland Federation of Labour and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers

The action has been called by the Labour Coordinating Council (LCC).

Muzi Mhlanga, Secretary-General of the LCC, and also Secretary-General of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), said the demonstrations would take place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week (12, 13 and 14 April 2011).

The logistics of the protests will be worked out later this week, but it is known that the marches will take place in three regions: Mbabane, Manzini and Nhlanguano.

The labour union action follows a demonstration on 18 March in which about 8,000 people marched on the office of Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini, to call for the resignation of the entire government along with a raft of other demands.<sup>9</sup>

The latest action coincides with an ‘uprising’ slated for 12 April which is being coordinated by a Facebook group. The LCC has not specifically announced that its action is part of that ‘uprising’.

### ***Observer* Uprising Scare tactics**

*5 April 2011*

The *Swazi Observer* is trying to instil fear throughout Swaziland with its false claim that the government ‘will deploy security forces to the country’s different schools next Tuesday to protect pupils and teachers during the proposed uprising’.

It is incorrectly suggesting that children are in danger from protesters during the day dubbed the 12 April Uprising.

Today (5 April 2011), the *Observer* splashes a huge headline **Cops to be deployed in schools on April 12** on its front page.

The *Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, says the news of police deployment ‘should come as a relief to parents’ who wanted to know ‘if it would be safe for them to send their children to school’.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/demands-of-protestors-in-full.html>

But, if you read the report you see that there is nothing to support the *Observer's* claim that children are in danger. And nobody actually says that police will be 'deployed' in schools.

Pat Muir, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Training, said there was no intention to close schools but should 'the need arise' they would deploy security forces.

That's a long way from saying cops will be deployed.

Muir told the newspaper that if the experience of 18 March (when teachers were among about 8,000 people on a protest march calling on the entire government to resign) was anything to go by there would be no problems on 12 April.

'Considering that last month during the mass strike action schools operations progressed smoothly and we expect the same even this time around if there would be any action,' the newspaper reported him saying.

So, no danger to children. No cops deployed in schools. Just King Mswati's newspaper telling lies to its readers. Again.

### **Police Torture Uprising Activist**

*7 April 2011*

A Swazi activist said today (7 April 2011) that he had been detained and beaten as police interrogated him about plans to organise protests on Tuesday against King Mswati III, the AFP news agency reports.

Nkolisi Ngcamphalana, national organiser for the youth wing of the banned opposition People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), told AFP that he was detained Tuesday night and held for 24 hours. He said police beat him, placed plastic bags over his head, and then interrogated him about calls for national protests.

'They grilled me about the April 12 uprising, and they kicked and beat me,' he said shortly after his release. 'Right now they are outside my house. They are intimidating my family,' he said. 'They threatened me with death.'

Several other activists have been arrested as police raided their homes in recent days, said Maxwell Dlamini, head of the Swaziland National Union of Students, which has led the protest calls. 'We expect more raids in the coming days,' he said.

### **Swazi PM Bans April 12 Uprising**

*7 April 2011*

Swaziland Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini has issued a banning order against protests due to take place on Tuesday (12 April 2011).

Dlamini stated, 'Government will ensure that the country remains peaceful. To this end, the security forces will be deployed to maintain law and order.'

His statement<sup>10</sup> issued today (7 April 2011) says that those wanting to protest had not been given permission to do so. He said in Swaziland, ‘any strike or protest action must be registered and given permission in accordance with the law’.

He went on, ‘Government has now learned that the formations in question have not complied with the procedures and notices prescribed by the relevant legislation. This then renders the protest action illegal. We do not, therefore, expect any individual to participate in any such proposed protest action.’

‘Government accordingly strongly warns those organizing, and intending to participate in, the protest action to refrain from doing so and continue in their normal day-to-day business.’

The Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations was quick to condemn the government action.

‘We note with concern the extra-judicial nature of this order and that the PM has once again shown disregard for the court processes that had not been completed at this time. His actions can only be seen to be deliberately provocative and contrary to good sense and sensible governance,’ it said.

### **Lufto Calls Protesters ‘Diseases’**

*7 April 2011*

Swaziland cabinet minister Lutfo Dlamini called Swazi people protesting for democracy in the kingdom ‘diseases’.

He told a meeting of diplomats yesterday (6 April 2011) that the 8,000 people who marched on the prime minister’s office on 18 March 2011 demanding the resignation of the entire government were ‘opportunistic diseases’.

His comments were also aimed at the ‘uprising’ expected in Swaziland next Tuesday (12 April 2011).

The *Times of Swaziland* newspaper today reports Dlamini saying that the ‘people who are sowing seeds of political disharmony among Swazis are nothing but “opportunistic diseases”’.

Dlamini was addressing a group of ambassadors and other diplomats who are based in Swaziland and Mozambique. He was trying to put across to them the measures that the Swaziland government wanted to take to get out of the economic mess successive Swazi governments, handpicked by King Mswati III, have created.

Dlamini, who has a long history of lying, couldn’t stop himself doing it again yesterday. According to the *Times*, he told the diplomats, ‘the problems currently faced by the country are purely economical and not political’.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.scribd.com/full/52497154?access\\_key=key-8wzyg3ayhgdvxsuhfyw](http://www.scribd.com/full/52497154?access_key=key-8wzyg3ayhgdvxsuhfyw)

Yesterday, I reported that when Dlamini lied to South African journalists they corrected him and told their readers the truth.<sup>11</sup>

Not so in Swaziland. The *Times*, the only independent daily newspaper in the kingdom, allowed Dlamini to tell his lie unchallenged.

The *Times* also reports, ‘Dlamini assured the envoys that government would stick to its role to maintain a friendly and peaceful country.’

We’ll see whether Dlamini is telling another lie next Tuesday when the main teachers’ union SNAT starts a three-day mass protest and the ‘uprising’ coordinated by a Facebook group is planned to start.

### ***Swazi Observer Can’t Stop Lying***

*8 April 2011*

You can always rely on the *Swazi Observer* to put the frighteners on the people, whenever the ruling elite demand it.

Today (8 April 2011), reporting the Swaziland PM’s ban on marches next week, in huge letters it proclaimed **Participate in protest at your own peril.**

This was under the even larger headline ‘**We will crush protests**’.

The *Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, was claiming to report on yesterday’s announcement that protests planned for next Tuesday are illegal. But instead it was just spouting propaganda.

Nobody – not even Barnabas Dlamini, the increasingly unpredictable Prime Minister – said ‘We will crush protests’. Yet, there it was on the *Observer* front page in quote marks, making it look like somebody did.

Nor did anyone say ‘Participate in protest at your peril’. They were both figments of the imagination of the *Observer* editor.

Under the big headline it ran a story – and ‘story’ is the correct word because a lot of it was just made up – that included these words, ‘Security forces will be deployed to ensure that the protests do not take place and marchers have been warned of dire consequences if they defied the order not to take part in the protests.’

Again, nobody said this. What the PM actually said was that if people took part in the march the law would be enforced, which isn’t the same thing at all.

So, what is the *Observer* up to? There are two possible explanations. One is that journalists at the *Swazi Observer* are incompetent and don’t understand the basic rule that a report’s headline must be justified by the text that runs below it.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/sa-press-see-through-lutfo-lies.html>

Another explanation is that the *Observer* is just a mouthpiece for King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch. It doesn't want the king or the governments he handpicks to give up any power to the legitimate demands of the protesters. So, to ensure the King clings to power it will do its best to scare the living daylights out of its readers.

It's not the first time the *Observer* has used scare tactics in this way. I wrote on Tuesday how it falsely claimed that children would be in danger if they attended school on 12 April.

The newspaper did it again yesterday when it ran a report with the headline **Send pupils to school at own risk – SNAT** which claimed that the teachers' union said parents who take their children to school on 12 April do so at their own risk.

But nowhere in the report did anyone – union leader, or lay person – say there was a risk. The best the paper could come up with was a quote saying there would be no teachers at school.

Lies, lies and more lies.

### **Swazi King 'Scared of Revolution'**

*8 April 2011*

Swazi King Mswati III sent his top advisers to meet with union leaders in a bid to avert anti-government protests next week in Africa's last absolute monarchy, a labour leader told the AFP news agency.

The king's Liqoqo Advisory Council met with union leaders late yesterday (7 April 2011), hours after Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini announced a ban on the protests planned to start Tuesday (12 April 2011), said Muzi Mhlanga, head of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers.

'The king is scared of a revolution, so he sent his advisers to find out what we want,' said Mhlanga, whose group is one of the protest organisers.

'We told him we want a transitional government and multiparty democracy.'

He added, 'The king is pleading that we cancel this thing. We told him it would be difficult because the decision has already been taken by our members.'

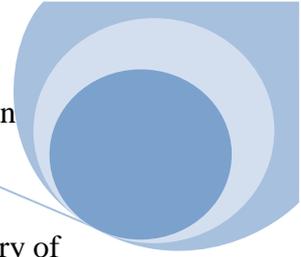
The council called a new meeting with the unions this afternoon for further talks, he added.

### **Unions to Ignore Protest Ban**

*8 April 2011*

Labour unions in Swaziland say their three-day mass protest due for next week will go ahead, despite the ban announced yesterday (7 April 2011) by the Prime Minister.

The Labour Coordinating Council (LCC) says Barnabas Dlamini had no legal right to announce the ban. He cited no laws that the unions are violating, nor did he produce a court order that they are accused of disregarding.



Dlamini, who is the illegally-appointed Prime Minister of Swaziland, has a long history of abusing civil liberties and human rights. In the past he has disregarded the courts when it suits him.<sup>12</sup>

In a statement the LCC said, it had followed all legal procedures and the protest set to start next Tuesday (12 April 2011) and due to last three days would go ahead.

The LCC is made up of all the major unions in Swaziland, including the Swaziland Federation of Labour, the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers.

Marches are due to take place in three regions: Mbabane, Manzini and Nhllangano.

### **Another Group to Defy March Ban**

*8 April 2011*

The Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) has joined with Swazi labour unions to defy the ban on protests, imposed by the Prime Minister yesterday.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) quotes an SDC spokesperson saying they are ‘adamant that the protest will go ahead as planned’.

Yesterday, Barnabas Dlamini announced that marches planned for next Tuesday (12 April 2011) were illegal and therefore banned.

At least three different protests were planned for Tuesday. As well as the SDC, which is celebrating its first anniversary, the Labour Coordinating Council (LCC) plans three days of marches. An ‘uprising’ coordinated through a Facebook site is also slated for the same day.

Last night, the LCC said it would go ahead with its marches.<sup>13</sup> It said the Prime Minister had no legal right to ban the protests.

### **Swazi PM Lies on Uprising Talks**

*8 April 2011*

Last month Barnabas Dlamini said his government had arranged to meet with leaders of the ‘uprising’ due for 12 April to see what their concerns were.

He was lying – again – to the Swazi people.

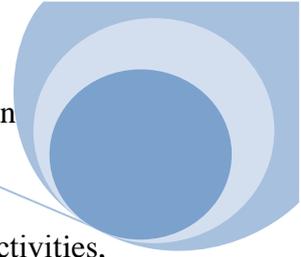
Instead of seeking dialogue he unleashed his terror forces on leaders of the ‘uprising’.

As reported today (7 April 2011), the national organiser of the banned Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) was taken in by police and tortured.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/new-pm-enemy-of-freedom.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/unions-to-ignore-protest-ban.html>



The Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN), one of the groups behind next Tuesday's activities, responded to this in a statement, 'The National Organizing Secretary of SWAYOCO, Mcolisi Ngcamphalala, was detained and later tortured by the police from Tuesday evening in Siphofaneni on suspicion that he was one of the organizers of the April 12 Swazi Uprising.

'At the torture chamber, a room in the police station especially reserved for this evil and illegal act, he was beaten and kicked whilst handcuffed, throttled, and suffocated with a plastic bag. These are well known torture tactics used by police, and they have resulted in fatalities before.

'The police came to fetch him from his home, where a SWAYOCO banner and other SWAYOCO and Socialist documents were confiscated. They started harassing and clapping him while they were still raiding his home.

'The police have threatened to stop the Uprising with force, promising to be all out in numbers on the planned date.

'A police officer by the name of Mthembu, who was also part of the gang of police that arrested Siphon Jele, and later stopped his funeral on the 16th of May, 2011, was part of the torture gang.'

Ngcamphalala was released yesterday.

SSN said in a statement, 'Upon releasing him they warned him not to be part of The April 12 Swazi Uprising because they would not hesitate to kill him.

'They also promised him that they would come back for him again. At the time of our interview with him, he stated that he was living in fear, not knowing when the police would come back for him.'

He is not the only one that has been raided or tortured. At least four other people are known to have been detained and tortured by police.

Ngcamphalala has since fled into a nearby forest and has not been heard from again. It is feared that the police could want to arrest him again.

### **Swazi Police Trap Workers in Offices**

*11 April 2011*

Swazi police have surrounded the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL) office preventing people from moving out ahead of the mass protest starting tomorrow (12 April 2011), the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) reports.

Meanwhile, it says, yesterday more than 40 activists who attended the SDC Anniversary Conference and Public Rally over the weekend had their political regalia and campaign material confiscated by the police at the border.

SDC said despite intimidation and harassment, the planned mass actions are going ahead.

It added, COSATU, SDC and other progressive forces in South Africa are going ahead with their 3 km march at Oshoek borders in solidarity with the suffering people Swaziland,

### **Swazi Police Claim Terror Threat**

*11 April 2011*

Swaziland's police chief has warned protestors not to take to the streets tomorrow (12 April 2011) in an 'illegal' demonstration against the government.

Police Commissioner Isaac Magagula put the frighteners on the Swazi people by claiming – without offering any evidence in support – there was a chance of protestors engaging in acts of 'sabotage' and 'terror'.

Claiming there are threats of 'terrorism' when there are not is a well-worn tactic of King Mswati III's regime. The King, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, and the governments he handpicks, have used the ploy many times in the past.

In 2008, they were able to pass the Suppression of Terrorism Act,<sup>14</sup> which allows the government to label all opposition groups 'terrorists'. The way the Act has been used to silence legitimate dissent has been roundly condemned by the international community.<sup>15</sup>

In the latest move, Magagula told a press conference yesterday (10 April 2011), 'We have credible information that the protest action is likely to be hijacked by faceless elements who have a hostile intent and the event will provide a perfect opportunity to such characters to perpetuate acts of sabotage and terror as opposed to the pursuit of socio-economic interests.'

The *Swazi Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, called this a 'final warning' to the demonstrators.

Magagula said the protests would not be best interest of national security, the newspaper reported.

It quotes him saying, 'As the police empowered by the laws of the land, in particular the Public Order Act and constitution, to prevent the staging of any event that is likely to result in the breach of peace and compromise public order, safety and security, security forces will be all out to maintain law and order.'

The *Observer* said Magagula would not come out clear on what would happen if the unions go ahead with their proposed protest march.

### **Fears for Safety of Protest Leaders**

*11 April 2011*

The Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) has been trying to make contact with the four youth leaders who were arrested last night (10 April 2011) and who have since disappeared.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/07/amnesty-calls-for-terror-protest.html>

<sup>15</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/11/article-19-and-swazi-repression.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/four-arrests-who-will-be-next.html>

In a statement SDC says that Samkeliso Ginindza, one of the four men, telephoned Mary Pais Da Silva (SDC Swaziland Convener) at 2050 hrs last night and informed her that they had been stopped and the attitude of the security forces was very hostile. He also said that they were unsure of their safety because of the conduct of the security forces towards them. It was agreed that they would keep in constant communication, however this was not the case as his mobile number is unavailable on the network (and so are the other comrades' numbers).

A legal team has been making attempts at tracing the four since word of their disappearance arrived at 1130hrs today, but so far there is no lead as to where they are. It is generally agreed that the security forces had a hand in their disappearance. Attempts to reach the police headquarters have been futile as there is no answer to the telephone calls being made.

Attempts at the Mbabane police station have not yielded any fruit, as the station commander is reported to be out of office and he is unreachable on his mobile number and this was as soon as attempts to call him thereon were made. At first his phone rang with no response.

### **Swazi Unions' Leadership Arrested**

*12 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Democracy Campaign

Labour leadership was this morning rounded up and arrested by the regimes security forces, the Swaziland Democracy Campaign reports.

They include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1. Barnes Dlamini-SFTU President**
- 2. Siphon Kunene-SUDF President**
- 3. Vincent Ncongwane-SFL Secretary General**
- 4. Phumelele Zulu-Dlamini-SFL Executive Member**
- 5. Sibongile Mazibuko-SNAT President**
- 6. Muzi Mhlanga-SNAT Secretary General**
- 7. Nomkhosi Dlamini-Gumedze-SFTU Women's Wing Secretary**

It is not known where the comrades have been detained.

In addition to the leadership, a Dutch journalist, **Rob Hartgers** who is in Swaziland to cover the action, has been detained at the Manzini Regional Headquarters. Another Dutch journalist, identified only as **Peter**, has been thoroughly searched at a roadblock near Manzini.

Meanwhile the paramilitary police in full riot gear, and include shields and rifles are chanting and marching along the streets of Manzini. Passing through Manzini's Freedom Square, where the march is supposed to start from this morning, SUDF's **Sikelela Dlamini** was threatened with instant arrest and as we write this, he is fortunately still free.

All buses coming from Big Bend have all been detained at the Police Station there and irrespective of who the passengers are. Four buses and six mini-buses from Simunye and Mhlume have also been detained. Buses from Mananga, ferrying teachers to the march have been detained.

As we write, over fifty (50) marchers/protesters have been arrested and detained and it is not known where they have been taken to. The security forces are literally grabbing everyone they can lay their hands on from the streets and detaining them. The latest we are getting is that at Moneni, as you enter Manzini from the Eastern part of Swaziland, comrades are being forcefully ejected from all vehicles, deprived of their cell phones and loaded into police vehicles to unknown destinations. , We are currently liaising with leadership that has not been detained as yet and word is **"THE MARCH GOES ON"**.

### **Regime Denies Human Rights**

*12 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Democracy Campaign

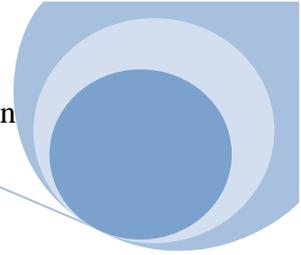
### **Massive Security Mobilisation Fails to Deter Protesters! The Struggle Continues**

What follows below is an on the spot report from the Coordinators of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign and the Swaziland United Democratic Front in Swaziland.

What we are witnessing is an unprecedented mobilization of the security cluster of the Swazi regime. Despite the statements of the Foreign Minister on SAFM this morning, and other spokespersons of the regime, the Swazi regime is flaunting all the universally accepted civil rights of its people to organize, gather and peacefully express their desire for a democratic Swaziland.

The minister said this morning that the government are 'in dialogue' with civil society and they are hoping to reach an understanding. Clearly as the statement below shows, 'dialogue' in Swaziland actually means illegal detention! It is now reliably reported that more than 50 leading activists have been detained including journalists from South Africa.

The regime believes that by arresting the leadership of the democracy campaign they can undermine the protest actions that are planned for today and the rest of the week. This is a regime that is desperately clinging to power. By acting in this way they will attract further condemnation by the international community, and fuel further the mobilization of the Swazi people themselves. Now is the time for SADC governments and especially the SA government to come off the fence and decisively side with the people of Swaziland. Waiting diplomatically in the wings is serving the regime, not the people.



## **Swazi Police Violent Crackdown on Protesters**

*12 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Solidarity Network

The police in Swaziland are dispersing crowds by detaining them and leaving them in far out places. Thirty Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) teachers were yesterday (11 April 2011) detained and later left without transport in far out spots in the kingdom.

At the moment the more than 500 teachers at the SNAT centre, the union's headquarters have been blocked by police in order to stop teachers from participating in the protests. All other teachers have been barred from leaving their schools, even those who had not planned to participate in the protests.

The police crackdown is all inclusive and is no longer targeting 'obvious participants'. Ordinary people on the streets have also fallen victim to the crackdown and are definitely not pleased by the action by police.

## **Manzini Grinds to a Standstill as Army Sent In**

Statement: Swaziland Solidarity Network

The situation in Manzini has descended to chaos and police are failing to handle it. This has prompted the state to send in the Red Barrettes, a special branch of the Swazi Army.

In the centre of the city, a police officer made the mistake of intimidating bus conductors who were going about their normal business. The bus conductors did not take kindly to this and beat up the police officer, who is suspected to be in a comma.

While trying to save their colleague, the police have created more chaos.

On another part of the city, close to Salesian High School, another protest camp is has been set up by protesters and police are no longer able to do as they please with them.

On the Grand Valley Hill, which is close to the bus rank, smoke was seen on the horizon and shots were heard being fired.

At the SNAT centre another skirmish is unfolding as protesters are defying police by regrouping every time they are dispersed.

The four protest centres are: The bus rank in Manzini, Salesian high school, SNAT Centre and St Michael's High School. The latest information coming out of the tiny kingdom is that the police have now run out of teargas.

## **More Protest Leaders Arrested**

*12 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Democracy Campaign

Leading trade unionists and activists including leaders of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign have been roughly manhandled and now arrested at the offices of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions. Comrades Mary Pais Da Silva, and Sikelela Dlamini, the Coordinators of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign and the Swaziland United Democratic Front respectively are amongst those who have just been detained with union leaders at 12.30pm.

Contingency plans have been developed for such an eventuality and despite the clampdown by the authorities the SDC and SUDF still has the means to receive messages and updates from inside the country and will continue to issue statements etc.

It has been confirmed by independent observers that this is the largest security mobilisation that has taken place in Swaziland for decades. It has also been reported that soldiers and police are bearing brand new weaponry, and the source of these instruments of oppression is being investigated.

The regime is determined to arrest all leaders, restrict the movement of all travellers including pedestrians, and do all they can to disrupt the protest actions that are unfolding on the streets of Swaziland.

Students have been confined to campuses, and anyone wearing union or political t-shirts or caps is being told to change, or risk arrest. Many are detained however, but when arrested are continuing to sing songs, and be defiant. This too indicates the growth in confidence of democracy activists. In several smaller towns protest gatherings have taken place for the first time in decades. Prominent leaders of faith based organisations have joined in the protests.

International solidarity messages are pouring in, and world trade unions, rights agencies and political organisations are more determined than ever to use the ILO and many other avenues to isolate the regime and expose further its barbarous character. The abuses of the regime have hardened resolve to action a comprehensive sanctions campaign, and to deprive the royal regime and its entourage from squandering the wealth they have accumulated at the expense of the poor. Measures are also underway to pressurise the IMF and other financial institutions to resist from investing in Swaziland to bail out the royal regime. Most importantly, what the regime is doing today is adding fuel to the fire of democratic change from below. Nothing will be quite the same ever again in Swaziland, and the days of the regime are numbered.

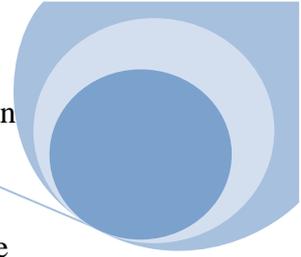
The Swaziland Democracy Campaign salutes all those who refuse to be intimidated and are celebrating their eventual freedom by refusing to be bowed at this time. We are with you comrades!

### **Workers Remain Defiant**

*12 April 2011*

Statement: People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO)

This morning, the workers movement in Swaziland staged a mass protest in the city of Manzini. A lot of developments took place in the morning as the state's security forces were determined to ensure the mass action did not take place.



Even before the action took place, many of the worker leaders were rounded up by the security forces as a blatant show of force. More activists were brutally rounded up at random across the city, loaded into trucks and sent to the Manzini Regional Police Headquarters. Along the roads many activists who were heading for Manzini city were forced out of their transport and sent back to their places.

In other areas like the Shiselweni region, about seven mini buses ferrying workers were turned back halfway between Hlatikulu and Manzini.

The PUDEMO President Mario Masuku was placed under house arrest together with many other activists.

In the city, there were occasional running battles between the protestors and the police. This resulted in businesses shutting down, public transport was quickly evacuated from the city rank.

The Prime Minister's promise that this was going to be a normal day was proved very wrong as there was no business as usual and the workers defied the threats made by the state.

PUDEMO salutes the workers and the people of Swaziland for standing up to the hostile regime and press through with their demands. We also salute our international allies for their undying show of solidarity to the struggling masses of Swaziland.

We further condemn the brutal use of force by the state's security forces on the protestors attempting to protect the undemocratic and oppressive Tinkhundla regime.

### **Da Silva Defiant After Arrest**

*12 April 2011*

*The following is a statement issued this evening (12 April 2011) by Mary Pais Da Silva, of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign, who was arrested today while in the middle of a telephone call to a journalist at South Africa's Eyewitness News<sup>17</sup>.*

### **BEATEN, ARRESTED AND DETAINED, BUT NOT OUT!!**

This below is a personal account of the treatment I received at the hands of police officers today:

1. Two male comrades and I were at the SFTU [Swaziland federation of Trade Unions] offices where we were sending out information to our international friends on the happenings of the protest action billed for today.
2. At roughly around 1230hrs, an army of male police barged into the offices and whilst I was in the middle of a telephonic, live interview with talk Radio 702 and headed directly to me and began punching and slapping me on my face.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/talk-radio-720-bulletin.html>

3. There was SUDF material in the office and I was questioned about it, to which I pleaded ignorance. This did not go down well with them and the same police officer (the most heavysset of them all), then came and continued assaulting me.
4. This time around, he decided to punch me on the stomach because he then became aware of the damage he was doing to my face. Another officer then decided to assist him in my assault.
5. I was then bundled into a van with the other two comrades and taken to the Manzini regional headquarters where we were detained for about two and a half hours. We were questioned individually.
6. During the whole process, I was being insulted with every vulgar word imaginable in the SiSwati language.
7. After the interrogation, I was strictly warned to desist from my activism and the station commander stated that they would do everything possible to find some incriminating evidence so that I can be arrested and imprisoned because I was proving to be a very painful thorn in their behinds.
8. I was also given a 'friendly' warning that my safety cannot be guaranteed.
9. I was then released.

This is what I have to say:

I will not be intimidated by these bullish antics of the government. Bashing me only strengthens my resolve in the role that I play in the democratic movement in Swaziland.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SWAZILAND MUST GO TO HELL AND ON THE WAY THERE, THEY MUST KISS MY BEAUTIFUL BEHIND!!!!

### ***Times Defends Dignity of King***

*13 April 2011*

The *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper, slammed the Swazi government for its handling of the protest yesterday (12 April 2011)

It called it 'shambolic', laughable' and 'arrogant'.

Unfortunately, the *Times* seems to be more concerned that the image of King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, may have been damaged internationally by the government's action, than by the injuries police inflicted on his subjects

The *Times* misses the point. The Swazi monarchy is the whole point. You cannot have a democracy with an absolute monarch. The international media know this and so do the king and his supporters. That's why they are clinging on for dear life.

The *Times* says it will be difficult to restore the 'dignity' of the king.

What dignity? King Mswati lost that a long time ago. There is no dignity being a 'king' of such a small kingdom as Swaziland. He lost any dignity when he let his greed get the better of him and he built 13 palaces, bought a fleet of expensive cars and now lives the lavish lifestyle while three in ten of his subjects are so hungry they are officially 'malnourished'.

The *Times* gets it half right in its editorial. The government has failed the people. But so too has King Mswati.

### **Amnesty Condemns State Violence**

*13 April 2011*

Statement: Amnesty International

### **Amnesty International Condemns Government's "Alarming" Violence Against Peaceful Protests in Swaziland**

(New York) -- Amnesty International today condemned the use by Swaziland authorities of state of emergency-style measures to crush peaceful anti-government protests taking place across the country and urged authorities to return to the rule of law.

'We are alarmed by the levels of state violence in the past 24 hours and the numbers of arbitrary and secret detentions witnessed during this period and fear that those targeted may be at risk of torture,' said Amnesty International.

Amnesty International has learned that union leaders who had been released from custody late Tuesday were placed under unlawful house arrest today.

The security forces used excessive force on Tuesday (12 April 2011) to disperse protesters.

Heavily armed security force members again today besieged the headquarters of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers and are currently conducting a search without a warrant inside the building. Union members and possibly also national and foreign journalists are present. The landlocked country in southern Africa is bordered to the north, south and west by South Africa and to the east by Mozambique.

### **Where is King Mswati III?**

*13 April 2011*

The *Southern Africa Report* journal (13 April 2011) says 'The king was absent as thousands of protesters took to the streets to face arrest and assault from security forces. Mswati left the country for an unknown destination several days before the 12 April kick-off for the protests. This is not unusual behaviour for the 42-year-old monarch, who is keen to be seen to be above disputes involving the common citizenry while keeping a tight hold on the strings pulling his ministers and advisors.'

### **Labour Protest Suspended**

*14 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Democracy Campaign

The leadership of the LCC (Labour Coordinating Council) has decided that in the best interests of its members, the protest action shall be suspended indefinitely.

This should not be taken as a sign of failure, but for what it is: a tactical retreat to re-strategize on the next phase of this mass rolling action.

It should be noted and applauded that the Swazi activists have not conceded defeat. We know that in every war, strategies are defined and redefined according to the prevailing circumstances and in this instance it is necessary to take a step back and take stock of what has happened. We draw our lessons from this and then plot the best way forward.

We in SDC Swaziland wish to express our profound gratitude to:

1. All our solidarity partners for the messages of solidarity and encouragement sent which have emboldened us more.
2. The international media for profiling the events and struggles of our country.
3. The Catholic Church of the Diocese of Manzini for offering sanctuary to activists despite the fact that security forces were camped at the Bishop's house, Cathedral and Catholic Centre entrances.
4. Everyone else that has supported us in our plight.

We wish to assure the world that no matter how bad the brutality, repression, suppression and oppression; no matter how long this fight will take; we will persevere. We will win this one come what may.

To the government of Swaziland: WE WILL BE BACK SOONER THAN YOU EXPECT!

### **Secretive Police Won't Name Suspects**

*15 April 2011*

Swaziland's secretive police are refusing to reveal the names of the three people they arrested on 'terror' charges.

And, they won't give details of what is it they are supposed to have done.

That didn't stop Isaac Magagula, Swazi Commissioner of Police, holding a press conference yesterday (14 April 2011) to boast of his force's success.

But, why won't they give the names? What are the police trying to hide?

Magagula did say the three were arrested following 'information in our possession that the event [the protests] would be hijacked by elements with ulterior motives for perpetrating subversive activities'.

He went on, 'True to our words, there are suspects who have been arrested in connection with explosives and incendiary materials that were intended to be used in the commission of acts of terror and sabotage during the course of the protest action.'

I smell a rat. The arrest took place after armed police raided the offices of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) on Wednesday (13 April 2011). Police were hell-bent on giving the teachers a beating and padlocked them in their offices.

In a move unprecedented in the history of Swaziland, the word got out to alert the international community that a police outrage was about to take place.<sup>18</sup> Within minutes, the alarm was raised around the world and protests were immediately made to international embassies, human rights groups and the media.

The whole world was watching. Gone are the days when the Swazi police could pick up a 'suspect' and simply make them disappear. The strong spotlight of the world now shines, even on Manzini.

The police were forced to justify their outrageous actions. And then what happened? They found three anonymous 'terror' suspects'

Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary-General of the Swaziland Federation of Labour, isn't fooled. He knows what's going on. It's a cover-up for the heavy-handed police raid on the SNAT offices. He reckons the 'suspects' won't be convicted at court.

He has history on his side. We all remember how the Swazi state locked Mario Masuku, President of the People's United Democratic Movement, up on remand for nearly a year on terrorism and sedition charges.

Masuku eventually made it to court in 2008 for a trial that was expected to last several days.<sup>19</sup>

But it wasn't to be: the judges laughed the case out of court after a couple of hours. No case to answer.

It looks like we might have another Masuku on our hands.

So Magagula, what about these three 'terrorists': tell the people what you really have on them.

If you want us to believe a word you say: put up or shut up.

### **Swazi Youth Leaders Charged Under the Suppression of Terrorism Act**

*15 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland Solidarity Network

The two youth activist leaders that were rearrested on Wednesday afternoon have since been charged under the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA).

The two are:

1. Maxwell Dlamini: President of the Swaziland National Union of Students (SNUS).
2. Musa Ngubeni: SWAYOCO Member.

<sup>18</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/urgent-call-for-help.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/09/swazi-state-stands-humiliated.html>

The two were arrested in Zakhele, a township the outskirts of Manzini. The people who had initially been arrested included Themba Mabuza, Jerome Dlamini and Sonkhe Dube. These three were released without charges.

The police claim they found all five of them in possession of detonators and cables for detonators but did not show them any of this material that they claim to have found. The police claimed that they were following a tip from an unknown person.

Further information provided by our sources is that the two who were charged were first tortured and then forced to write a report of what they had been doing between Friday and Wednesday, when they were released from being detained on Sunday.

These reports were dictated to them and they were forced not to include anything that the police did to them – including the torture.

The police read out a list of wanted people to Sonkhe Dube before releasing him. These are Manqoba and Thankukukhanya. Their surnames were not mentioned.

### **Watershed in Swazi Struggle History**

*18 April 2011*

Statement: Swaziland United Democratic Front

The Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) proclaims the April 12th – 15th anti-Tinkhundla protests a significant milestone in the history of the struggle for multiparty democracy in Swaziland. The SUDF proudly cites the following indicators to back its bold claim:

Swazis from all walks of life woke up on the 12th and boarded transport to take them to the centre of the action in Manzini in protesting decades of chronic Tinkhundla misrule; a feat they repeated without fail despite all forms of intimidation until the action was suspended in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>

It took the state police roadblocks to offload buses, detain protesters, and divert them in order to prevent them from reaching their intended destination and partaking in the marches.

It took paramilitary police's uncompromising brutality to prevent people from standing in twos or threes inside Manzini, especially at and around the bus rank, to ensure that no protest march had a chance of starting

It took the same police to detain trade union and civil society leadership to ensure that the protests were leaderless and therefore could not proceed with the marches.

It took the police to disrupt all meetings particularly at the SNAT Centre by the remaining leadership of the prodemocracy campaign to still provide leadership and direction to protestors

It also took a police crackdown on the SUDF offices at SFTU to sever the essential communication lines through which Sikelela Dlamini and Mary Da Silva were updating the world on the protests inside Swaziland

It took the state security forces to impose a 9 p.m. curfew to prevent protestors from gathering by nightfall too.

But the damage had already been done nonetheless as the world is currently in no doubt as to the scale of repression and the kind of pressure that must now be put on the Tinkhundla regime to allow reforms'

We would like to thank our affiliates for once again heeding the call to come out and demand an end to Tinkhundla dictatorship and the introduction of multiparty democracy. We are forever indebted to our international solidarity partners for their unfailing support. We count on all of you to continue to support our campaign as we intensify our demand for political freedom.

Our starting point has to be the demand for the immediate and unconditional release of comrades Maxwell Dlamini and Musa Ngubeni from Tinkhundla holding cells. They have committed no crimes other than demanding their citizenship right to multiparty democracy.

### **Protest Arrest: Personal Account**

21 April 2011

*Percy Masuku is the National Coordinator of the International Research Academy for Labour and Education (IRALE). Masuku, his colleagues and a number of trade union leaders and activists were arrested by the Swazi Police on 13 April 2011. Here he recounts his ordeal.*<sup>20</sup>

On 12 April 2011 leaders of the labour movement, political formations, youth and student organisations, civil society organisations like the Swaziland Democracy Campaign and ordinary Swazis were all arrested and treated to the 'hospitality' of the police of the ruling royal Swazi regime by means of torture and other dehumanizing elements characteristic of this corrupt regime.

There were running battles between the various organisations and the police and armed forces in which the forces prohibited the workers, students, youth, democracy activists, faith-based organisations and women's organisations from marching into the city centre in Manzini. The main intention of the march was to raise high the issues that the government of Swaziland has failed to deliver; these demands had been raised earlier by, largely, the labour formations. The city centre was turned into a battle field where workers were teargassed, baton-charged and pursued into various directions by the heavy-handed police who understood nothing but the language of violence.

The police did not want the march to go ahead at all and arrested all leaders in order to render the protest action ineffective. Despite all these intimidation tactics, we converged at the

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-19493-f0.cfm>

SNAT Centre (an administration block of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers) and demanded to be allowed to march into the city and publicly raise our demands.

Central to these demands was the issue of the removal of the tinkhundla system of governance. The police denied the marchers the opportunity to join the main road into the city centre and threatened the marchers with violence. Furthermore, the demand to voice out the public vote-of-no-confidence in the political system of royalty made issues even worse, because it confirmed their worst fears of an uprising (of whom I was part).

We decided to push the cordon line of the OSSU (Operational Support Services Unit) which is a para-military police unit for breaking riot and other such related mass protests and uprisings. It was then that hell broke loose, and the police fired teargas, splashed water on protesters and used batons to charge on the unarmed marchers. It was at this moment that the presence of the army was becoming even more pronounced, as their vehicles were seen patrolling in the city centre. We ran in different directions after being baton-charged by the police. The day ended with the police and the other security forces spreading all over the place, taking over the streets and intimidating everyone present.

On the morning of 13 April 2011, the workers again re-converged in town after efforts were made to be together and ensure the continuity of the march in town. Again, as expected, the police were there in their riot gear to disperse marchers.

After numerous attempts, we re-converged at the bus rank where there was a high concentration of activists and workers. At the bus rank, workers started a song and the police and correctional services, security personnel silenced it through the threat of violence. After that one comrade from one of the leading political parties (the People's United Democratic Movement - PUDEMO), one from a youth organisation (Swaziland Youth in Action - SYA), a public transport worker and I started a song, which was joined by most workers and democracy activists gathered there. That was enough to provoke the wrath of the state. The police started dispersing the crowd forcefully.

The police then surrounded the comrade from PUDEMO whom they accused of having caused a public disorder. They manhandled him and bundled him to the rank sub-station of the police which is about 15 meters from the point of arrest - still in the bus rank.

Immediately afterwards, the public transport worker was kicked and beaten up. A few minutes later, a colleague from SYA and I were grabbed from behind, kicked, sworn at, (with the worst insults in our native Siswati language) and publicly humiliated, and taken to the same place. We were told in no uncertain terms that we 'would never rule this country, stop dreaming'. The time of arrest was around 14:40 pm (GMT).

After dispossessing us of our mobile phones, we were then taken to the Manzini Regional Offices for further interrogation. Upon reaching there we found other comrades and were made to wait for nearly an hour before being called in for interrogation.

During the interrogation, which lasted some 45 minutes, the police were asking a lot of irrelevant and unrelated questions. In the process, they would now and again curse and rebuke us. This was obviously meant to dehumanise us. But it never did - only made us resolve that this political system is not meant for the present day society and that it belongs only in the dustbin of history. We were interrogated by a benchful of the elite of the security

forces. We could not tell whether it was police alone or with the others, as this was obviously a joint co-operation effort.

Our photos were taken thereafter. We were then bundled into a van and driven back to an unclear destination - known only to the police. We drove all the way towards Sidvokodvo, which is about 25km from Manzini city centre. We were driven further on a gravel road going to Sigcineni, a rural place outside of Manzini, about 40km away. There, along the way, we were dropped off, given back our mobile phones and told to go home. Through our discussions with our comrades we got the information that we were only a few kilometres away from Egebeni, the operational headquarter of the paramilitary OSSU.

In conclusion, we cannot be intimidated and we remain resolved that indeed our struggle is not only morally correct but also supported by all in the country and beyond!! We shall be Free!!

### **‘Prosecute Brutal Swazi Police’**

*25 April 2011*

The Swaziland police were out for blood during the 12 April protest – and they got what they were looking for.

They ‘behaved like hired mercenaries or drug cartel members’ and abducted ‘innocent citizens for wearing red T-shirts, which are commonly worn by workers during their important gatherings’.

This condemnation came from Innocent Maphalala, editor of the *Times Sunday*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland.

Writing in his own newspaper yesterday (24 April 2011), Maphalala reflected on police behaviour earlier this month during what had been billed in advance as the ‘April 12 Swazi Uprising.’

He wrote, ‘The Royal Swaziland Police were out for blood – and they got it. *Times of Swaziland* lensman Mkhulisi Magongo is actually one of the people who had to be assisted when they started bleeding from injuries sustained during altercations between the police and protesters.

‘Reports are that the altercations were actually a result of the protestors being provoked by the police.

‘The police had apparently been bored on March 18, 2011, when 8,000 workers staged the first protest.

‘On this day, the police had maintained law and order – and only a few incidents of violence of a smaller scale were witnessed.

‘Between April 12 and 13, however, they behaved like hired mercenaries or drug cartel members who just wanted to see blood. The Royal Swaziland Police abducted innocent

citizens for wearing red T-shirts, which are commonly worn by workers during their important gatherings.

‘These were illegally driven to distant areas and told to get off the government trucks they had been sorrowfully travelling in, not knowing if they would ever see their families again. The police also beat up people who tried to chant slogans and dance the toyi-toyi.

‘One of the pictures of the man they assaulted at the Manzini Bus Rank shows a group of about...yes, eight of them, surrounding one unarmed man and kicking him while he lay on the ground.

‘If this is not a crime, then we should set free all the killers, car thieves and bank robbers doing time in jail.

‘We should not prosecute any of the men and women who assault their partners.

‘The Swazi Police committed very serious crimes by abducting workers and innocent bystanders who happened to have gone to Manzini, where the protest was to be concentrated, on April 12.

‘They also deserve to be punished for beating them.’

He went on, ‘If the implicated police officers are not prosecuted for these crimes, we might see worse in the next few weeks.

‘I am saying this in the backdrop of reports that, after April 12, Swazi workers have resolved to stage more protests. I am also saying this on the ‘eve’ of Workers Day, which is on May 1.

‘We shall all remember that May 1, 2010 was the last day we all saw Siphso Jele, who was arrested for wearing a T-shirt with a PUDEMO emblazoned across the front of it. Saying sorry to the abducted and assaulted workers and ordinary citizens for what happened last year, as well as to the family of Siphso Jele is not enough.

‘Offending police officers need to be punished, lest they commit more serious crimes against the citizenry. We do not want to start speculating about them committing all these crimes because they were carrying out orders. Who would issue such heinous orders?’

### **Global Spotlight on Swazi Clampdown**

*7 May 2011*

The Swaziland Government is coming under intense scrutiny from international bodies for its violent clampdown of the 12 April prodemocracy protest.

Swazi state police and army took to the streets to prevent trade unionists, students and others from marching to protest against the government’s handling of the economy and to call for political reform.

Last week a delegation of advocates from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Lawyers’ Association visited Swaziland on a fact-finding

mission to prepare a report for the next regional bloc meeting.

The *Mail and Guardian*, South Africa, reported that SADC has been heavily criticised for its silence on Swaziland and the mission was welcomed by activists in the country. Last week the International Labour Organisation (ILO) also went to Swaziland to meet the government.

Mission head Vic van Vuuren said he raised concerns directly with the labour and justice ministers about allegations of heavy-handed policing during what was supposed to be an organised labour march.

Van Vuuren told the *Mail and Guardian*, 'It's not totally clear exactly what happened on April 12 and 13 [2011] but we made it clear that, for one thing, union leaders should not have been detained on their way to take part in the march.' He said the government had agreed to an ILO-hosted workshop to train the police in how to deal with labour protests.

Meanwhile, unionists are planning to take legal action against members of the Swazi Police Force over the way their colleagues were treated during the recent crackdown.

Thuli Makama, a lawyer and director of the Swaziland Legal Assistance Centre, said, 'We're speaking to the unions now to gather evidence, such as doctors' reports, so that we can present our case.'

'The police really overstepped the mark; people were assaulted, man-handled, abducted and dumped in remote forest areas.' Makama said that lawyers visiting clients in detention were made to sit on the floor and were aggressively searched. Some were considering taking civil action of their own.

Freedom House has also been in Swaziland, where delegates met separately with prodemocracy advocates and government.

During the protests of 12 and 13 April police fired teargas and water cannon and detained at least 100 people. Two youth activists Maxwell Dlamini and Musa Ngubeni have been remanded in custody since 13 April on explosive charges. Their bail hearing was adjourned yet again yesterday.<sup>21</sup>

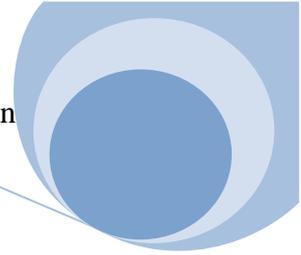
Last week, police staged a dawn raid on the home of Simon Mvubu, First Vice-president of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), and questioned him about his connections to a Facebook group promoting an uprising.

*This section on the April 12 Uprising contains only a small selection of items originally posted on the Swazi Media Commentary blogsite. This is both for space and copyright reasons. For much more information, including statements from organisations participating in the protests, radio, television and press reports go to the Swazi Media Commentary site itself by clicking here:*

<http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/search/label/April%2012%20Uprising>

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<sup>21</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/activists-are-security-risk-court.html>



## 2. The Economy in Meltdown

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### **IMF shock: More Drastic Action Needed**

*14 January 2011*

The Swaziland Government made the economic crisis<sup>22</sup> in the kingdom worse by agreeing a supplementary budget in November 2010, according to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report published yesterday (13 January 2011).<sup>23</sup>

And the Government's decision to increase spending on 'non-priority' areas means it must impose even harsher measures on the Swazi people than those already announced.

The IMF wants more government services to be privatised and a squeeze on wages in the kingdom, where seven in ten of the population already earn less than one US dollar a day.<sup>24</sup>

The IMF blamed the Swazi Government for helping to create the economic crisis in the first place. It said the Ministry of Finance, headed by Majozie Sithole,<sup>25</sup> the Finance Minister in Swaziland for the past ten years, was not able to cope with the crisis and needed more help to build up its capacity.

Top of the reasons for the economic crisis is what the IMF calls 'a high government service wage bill', which has 'contributed to making the Swaziland wage bill one of the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa'.

The economy generally in the kingdom ruled by King Mswati III 'continues to underperform other Southern African Customs Union (SACU) members, reflecting an overvalued exchange rate, continued structural impediments to growth, and the heavy toll of HIV/AIDS on economic activity'.

This lack of good management coupled with a reduction in cash receipts from SACU has led to the crisis, the IMF said.

'The government also added to fiscal pressures by submitting a supplementary budget to parliament in November 2010 to clear capital expenditure arrears. The deficit has been financed through a drawdown of government deposits at the central bank and domestic arrears on all expenditure items, except wages and utilities,' the IMF said.

IMF Directors said there would have to be 'additional measures in the 2011/12 budget to compensate for recent increases in non-priority [Government] spending'. Although it did not mention the Sikhuphe Airport<sup>26</sup> project by name, it must have had in mind the government's

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<sup>22</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/governments-economic-crisis.html>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2011/pn1106.htm>

<sup>24</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/government-cuts-people-will-die.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/11/finance-minister-runs-for-cover.html>

<sup>26</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/swaziland-government-snubs-imf.html>

decision in December 2010 to spend another E350 million (about US\$50 million) on King Mswati's vanity project.

The government's so-called Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR), put forward by Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini and Sithole, the Finance Minister, will not be enough to rescue the economy, the IMF said.

It welcomed the FAR, which includes raising taxes from the poorest people<sup>27</sup> in Swaziland, sacking 7,000 public servants and introducing Value Added Tax (VAT) on goods and services, 'but emphasized the need for more ambitious and sustained efforts to revitalize Swaziland's economic performance'.

The IMF welcomed the Government's 'intention to reduce the budget deficit to 2 percent of GDP by 2014/15. However, they considered that achieving this target requires bolder fiscal adjustment and budgetary reforms than envisaged in the current plan'.

It said, 'additional technical assistance is also necessary to build up implementation capacity, particularly at the Ministry of Finance.'

The IMF said the Government should 'mobilize additional domestic financing'. Although it did not spell out the consequences of this it could mean new taxes, higher existing taxes and getting more from other forms of government revenue. It could also mean more government borrowing, but in a kingdom of one million people, where seven in ten earn are in abject poverty, there isn't much money to borrow.

IMF Directors also 'called for stepped up efforts to improve the business environment, including by reviving the government's privatization program, reducing the cost of doing business, and keeping labor costs in line with those in the region'.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) report came at the end of a visit it made to Swaziland, which ended on 10 January 2011.

### **Government to Blame for Crisis**

*29 January 2011*

We can now put to rest any suggestion that Swaziland's present economic crisis is a result of the so-called global financial meltdown of 2008.

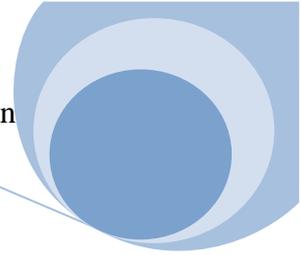
Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's Prime Minister, and Majozi Sithole, who has been Finance Minister for the past 10 years, constantly try to kid us that the kingdom's economic mess is none of their fault and is all down to a mixture of the 'global crisis' and a cut in income from the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU).

But they are exposed by the latest of an increasing number of reports from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about Swaziland's economic mess. The report,<sup>28</sup> published this week (24 January 2011), contains ample, damning, evidence about the consequences of economic

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<sup>27</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/poor-hit-hardest-by-imf-cuts.html>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.aspx?sk=24589.0>



mismanagement by successive governments chosen by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The 59-page IMF report reveals that the government is responsible for wasting resources by creating and sustaining a too-large public sector. IMF says the size of the public sector may actually stop activity in the private sector. 'The Swazi government participates in the economy in a wide range of areas (transportation and telecommunication being prominent ones) and often in a proportion, which theoretical and empirical studies would suggest are detrimental to a healthy and sustainable long term growth and development path,' the report states.

It goes on to say that government consumption as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – everything produced in the kingdom - is relatively high in Swaziland, when compared to other similar nations, or when compared to the fast growing Asian region.

In addition, far too much of the government's spending goes on public sector wages. 'In 2010 the cost of the civil service wage bill added up to 17.8 percent of GDP, which is more than half of the overall expenditure. Budget expenses on the wage bill are much higher in Swaziland than in many parts of the world.'

Despite the problems of the private sector, even when businesses do want to operate in Swaziland, government 'red tape' prevents it.

The IMF reveals that Swazi authorities request in excess of 15 percent more documents prior to export than the sub-Saharan Africa average, and twice as many documents prior to export than the Euro Area.

The IMF goes on, 'On the time required to enforce a contract the picture is even worse. The World Bank Doing Business database also shows that over time various indicators have been stagnant for Swaziland, while they have improved in the majority of other countries.'

It adds, 'This means that the Swazi competitiveness has been deteriorating compared to other regions of the world.'

There are also huge disadvantages for business by having the Lilangeni (Swaziland's currency) pegged in value to the South African Rand.

'While the Lilangeni has been pegged to the South African Rand, the Swazi currency has been appreciating in real terms against the Rand, especially in the second half of the last decade, suggesting a loss of competitiveness against South African producers.' Which, in plain English means Swaziland would be able to sell goods in the international market at a cheaper price than its South African competitors if its currency wasn't pegged to the Rand.

The IMF says the main factor behind the overvaluation lies in the public sector wage policy, which has given consistent wage increases over the years, while productivity did not improve. 'Moreover, despite comparative advantages in some export-oriented sectors (e.g., sugar, cassava, fruit juices), the private sector is still in dire need of further development, being held back by the high cost of doing business, as assessed by the World Bank.'

Present government policies are unsustainable. The IMF describes as ‘unfortunate’ (diplomatic-speak for ‘crazy’) ‘that the government moved forward with a supplementary budget [in December 2010] on a nonpriority capital project in the midst of a fiscal crisis’. That would be the E350 million extra it allocated to Sikhuphe Airport, King Mswati’s vanity project.

Furthermore, against IMF advice, cuts were proposed on [unspecified] pro-poor spending projects.

The IMF also says that if the government is unable to pay public service wages it would have ‘dire consequences for the rest of the economy, including the banking system’.

Banks would find that there could be a ‘rapid increase’ in the number of people defaulting on their loans. ‘As the government continues to draw down its deposits at the central bank, the gross official reserves of the central bank will be further depleted, calling into question external stability.’

In conclusion the IMF says, ‘The sharp decline of SACU revenue this year and the steady ratcheting up of the wage bill over the last decade have led to a fiscal crisis. The treasury balances have been depleted, the gross international reserves have fallen dramatically, and the government is starting to accumulate large domestic arrears on all expenditure items, except wages and utilities. Continuing on the same trend will lead to higher domestic arrears, including on civil service wages, a spreading of the crisis to the financial sector, and possibly social upheaval.’

### **Prayerful King Lets Down His Subjects**

*31 January 2011*

Swaziland’s King Mswati III has failed his people in their moment of crisis.

This week the Swaziland Central Bank failed to raise enough money on the financial markets to pay public sector salaries.<sup>29</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned of ‘social upheaval’, if the economy wasn’t mended quickly.

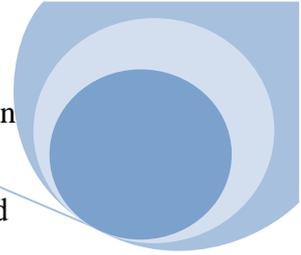
But instead of leading the kingdom he rules as sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, King Mswati’s only solution is to ‘pray’.

The *Times Sunday*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, in a report yesterday (30 January 2011), headlined **King sees no need to panic**, said, ‘The King gave the country some hope that it would rise above these economic challenges. He said there was no reason to panic, urging his people to stay calm and focused. “Let us praise God, celebrate when you face challenges. Be like an eagle that faces the lightning and let us trust in God who has all our answers, God has all our blessings,” he said.’

The King was leading a prayer session at Lozitha Palace for the kingdom’s survival in the face of the current economic crisis.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/financial-markets-snob-swaziland.html>



The *Times Sunday* reported that the King said Swaziland should pray earnestly to God because He rewards those who diligently seek him.

The *Times Sunday* said, 'His Majesty left women in tears, shouting Hallelujah and others speaking in tongues when preaching.'

This was the only public statement the King has made directly to his subjects about the present financial calamity facing his kingdom.

There was a political overtone to the prayer meeting. Pastor Griffiths Dlamini told the congregation and the King, 'People in power usually find a scapegoat when there is a crisis. They may use you, Your Majesty, as a scapegoat, not wanting to face the challenges, thus setting you against your people.'

Pastor Griffiths also prayed to God to bestow power upon the King to detect liars and detractors.

Without a hint of irony, Rev Obed Mavuso, representing the League of Swaziland Churches, 'blasted those who pretend to be loyal to the King yet their intention was to benefit personally.'

'He said these people came to the King kneeling down and showing fake respect yet they were not what they pretended to be,' the *Times Sunday* reported.

But, despite all this hyperbole, even the *Times Sunday* felt the need to bring its readers down to earth a bit, reporting, 'Currently government is failing to finance some of her capital projects. Ministries have been urged to cut budgets by 24 percent. The government has introduced a voluntary exit package for civil servants who have served for 15 years and above, and are above the age of 45.'

'The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has advised government to lay off 10,000 workers.'

After the prayer meeting the Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) said in a statement, 'Swazi people need to force the King out of their country. This man will not be affected one bit by the country's economic collapse.'

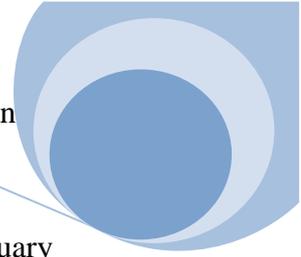
'At the moment all government ministries ... have been forced to scale down their budgets by 24 percent. Meanwhile royal expenditure remains unaffected by this and will continue to increase.'

'All this expenditure is meant to pamper a family that has its own personal sources of income both within the country and outside. This means that even if the government would no longer have enough to give to the King he would still be able to live in opulence.'

### **Swazi Budget Fails the Poor**

*19 February 2011*

We were promised a 'pro poor' budget by Swaziland's Finance Minister Majozie Sithole – but we didn't get it.



When you strip away the weasel words from the budget statement yesterday (18 February 2011), you are left with one inescapable fact: the Swaziland Government is unable to tackle poverty in Swaziland.

Sithole told the *Times of Swaziland* this week, ‘The budget to be presented will target mainly the poor. We have put priority on the poor. We have made priorities based on the public’s needs. The situation is not entirely bad but government must return to a position where there is money to do the things initially budgeted for.’

But that’s not what he delivered. By Sithole’s own admission in his speech, ‘The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development has stated that our economy must grow at least by 5 % each year to ensure Government is able to alleviate poverty.’

But Sithole could offer nothing to the kingdom except a promise of a ‘bleak’ future.

He said in his speech, ‘Preliminary estimates reflect that overall gross domestic product will grow by 2.0 % in 2010 after a sluggish growth of 1.2 % in 2009. It is further expected to pickup in 2011, expanding by 3.3 % as economic activity continues to recover. However with the global growth likely to remain weak, a bleak outlook is anticipated especially on the high unemployment levels which are expected to persist for several years, thus the need for decisive action and crucial policy adjustments to cater for jobs creation.’

So 2 percent growth, maybe. And 3.3 percent if you’re lucky. At least Sithole is more realistic than King Mswati III, who said in his own speech at the opening of parliament two weeks ago, Swaziland can ‘double our national output.’ That’s double, as in have 100 percent growth.

Employment prospects in Swaziland are abysmal. In the past year Sithole counted 3,900 job losses (that’s the ones he knows about). The much lauded (by the Swazi Government, anyway) Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) was able to create 2,655 jobs between January and December 2010 through foreign direct investment (FDI). That’s a net loss of 1,245 jobs.

And those calculations don’t include the 7,000 jobs that the government says it will cut from the public service.

So where are new jobs coming from? Sithole said, ‘SIPA seeks to foster linkages between FDI [foreign direct investment] and domestic SMEs [small and medium enterprises] with a target of 1,000 jobs created by local SMEs.’ Not enough: nowhere near enough.

The reliance on FDI is misguided since recent history tells us that Swaziland has failed to attract any FDI worth the name – and what little it gets tends to be for textile factories, offering sweatshop conditions.

And this is Sithole’s plan for jobs, as set out yesterday:

Improve governance so as to build investor confidence and allow for greater transparency and accountability;

Improve the export base and facilitate increased participation of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector in international trade; and

Attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and provide support for the development and the involvement of domestic investors in the manufacturing and other businesses.

All of these things have been tried in the past and failed. So what's different now? The sad, inevitable answer is: Nothing.

Finance Minister Sithole and the Swaziland Government cannot come up with an original idea between them. They got us into this mess and they have no idea how to get us out of it.

Expect more of the same in the year ahead.

### **King's Airport: More Money Wasted**

*20 February 2011*

Even though budgets across government departments were slashed by 20 percent, the Swaziland Finance Minister Majozi Sithole has still managed to find another E469 million (US\$66 million) to waste on Sikhuphe Airport.

Today (20 February 2011), the *Times Sunday* reported that the E469 million to be spent this year includes construction costs at the airport, road building, at least E15 million to market the airport, E10 million to relocate services for the Manzini-Mbhadlane road project, which is also a link road to Sikhuphe, plus a further E6 million to be spent by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development on the establishment of a Sikhuphe Local Authority.

Sithole told the Swazi parliament during his budget speech on Friday (18 February 2011) that 'preparations for the operation of the Sikhuphe Airport is at an advanced stage'. What he didn't say was that the airport has now missed its opening date of March 2010 by almost exactly one year. And it's missed every other deadline set since then.

So when will it be finished? Sithole didn't give a date for completion. Economic Planning and Development Minister Prince Hlangusemphi, also refused to give the *Weekend Observer* newspaper a date for completion. But, Bertram Stewart, the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, later told the *Times Sunday*, the airport would be completed by June (but he didn't say which June).

The *Weekend Observer* reported yesterday that work is continuing on building the airport, despite lots of problems relating to cash. In October 2010 contractors stopped work because the government had not paid its bills.<sup>30</sup> The *Times Sunday* reported that contractor Stefanutti & Bressan was owed E146,145,604.82 and Inyatsi Construction was owed E64,260,884.20.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/gvt-bill-unpaid-workers-laid-off.html>

One informed estimate is that by the time all work is finished on the airport it will have cost US\$1 billion.<sup>31</sup>

Innocent Maphalala, Editor of the *Times Sunday*, writing in his own newspaper today, makes the very valid comment, 'It is obvious that as far as this airport is concerned, it is all systems go. Sithole and his Cabinet colleagues are not stupid. They know Sikhuphe will not even be able to help the country recoup what it has spent building it. So, why are they pressing on?'

At no point has there been an independent 'needs analysis' to see whether Swaziland needs a new airport. Earlier this month I revealed<sup>32</sup> that the airport had no taxiway and would not be able to handle large numbers of aircraft. By the airport management's own calculation, the maximum number of passengers the airport expects to handle is 300,000 per year - the equivalent of fewer than two Jumbo Jet-loads of passengers per day.

Bertram Stewart is still making claims that the airport will be a success. He says his ministry is in negotiations with several prospective airlines which have shown interest in utilising it.

He refused to name them to the *Times Sunday*, but said negotiations with an airline 'were at an advanced stage'. He only said the airline was world renowned and it would use the airport as its base for its operations in Southern Africa.

We've heard all this before. In October 2009, King Mswati claimed Etihad Airways from the Gulf State of Abu Dhabi was showing 'deep interest' in using Sikhuphe. Nothing has been heard since.

The *Weekend Observer* said, 'A team of investors is already in the country wishing to construct a railway line from Sikhuphe to join the one to Maputo. The same investors are planning to construct another line from Ngwenya tourist attraction area to Carolina in South Africa. This would enable the movement of tourists by luxury rail coaches to and from the neighbouring countries while enjoying the landscape.'

I don't believe a word of it. Do you?

## **E1bn Spend for Army and Police to Stop people Uprising**

*24 February 2011*

The Swaziland Government is spending more than E1 billion this year on the army and police force to try to avoid an uprising of the Swazi population.

Majozi Sithole admitted as much yesterday (23 February 2011) at an 'open stakeholder dialogue on the 2011-2012 budget and Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap'.

'Yes, we are spending a lot on the army but we are not anticipating what is happening in North Africa to come here,' he said.

'However, the army is there to avoid such situations,' the minister warned.

<sup>31</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/sikhuphe-cost-soars-to-1bn.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/sikhuphe-airport-is-too-small.html>

Sithole was responding to a question about why so much money was being spent on the army and police – the total budget for Swaziland in the coming year is only E10.7 billion. The budget for the army and police is the equivalent of about half the national budget deficit (E2.243 billion for the 2011/12 fiscal year).

Or put another way, if this vast money wasn't spent, Swaziland wouldn't be in the economic mess that it is.

It is difficult to see why the Swaziland Government wants to spend E1 billion on the army and police, unless it is to be able to use the forces against the civilian population. Swaziland is not at war and it has no serious foreign affairs commitments that require it to have a large army.

A clue to the thinking of the Swaziland Government, appointed by King Mswati III, came this week via a Wikileaks United States diplomatic cable.<sup>33</sup>

The cable, written in 2009 by Maurice Parker, the then US Ambassador to Swaziland, revealed that the UK Government had blocked an arms deal between a UK company and the Swaziland Government because it feared their 'possible use for internal repression'.

The Swazi Government wanted to buy equipment worth US\$60 million (E426 million).

Among items listed for purchase were, '3 Bell Model UH-1H helicopters, FN Herstal 7.6251mm Minimi light machine guns, blank and tracer ammunition, armored personnel carriers, command and control vehicles including one fitted with a 12.7x99mm M2 Browning heavy machine gun and others fitted with the FN Herstal light machine guns, military ambulances, armored repair and recovery vehicles, weapon sights, military image intensifier equipment, optical target surveillance equipment, 620 Heckler & Koch G36E assault rifles, 240 Heckler & Koch G36K assault rifles, 65 Heckler & Koch G36E rifles, 75 Heckler & Koch UMP submachine guns 9x19mm, and 35 Heckler & Koch USP semi-automatic pistols'.

The Swaziland Government said it wanted the items to fulfil its United Nations 'peacekeeping' obligations in Africa.

The UK Government didn't believe a word of it and thought either the weapons would be used against the Swazi civilian population, or they were being bought in order to sell on to another country. The UK Government blocked the deal.

In his diplomatic cable, Parker said, 'The array of weapons requested would not be needed for the first phases of peacekeeping, although it is possible someone tried to convince the Swazi government they were required. The GKOS [Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland] may have been attempting to build up domestic capability to deal with unrest, or was possibly acting as an intermediary for a third party such as Zimbabwe or a Middle Eastern country that had cash, diamonds or goods to trade.'

As the *Guardian* (UK) newspaper reminded its readers this week,<sup>34</sup> Swaziland has a poor human rights record which was criticised by the US state department in its 2009 report (the year the deal was to have taken place).

<sup>33</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swazi-secret-arms-deal-for-iran.html>

‘Government agents continued to commit or condone serious abuses, and the human rights situation in the country deteriorated. Human rights problems included inability of citizens to change their government; extrajudicial killings by security forces; mob killings; police use of torture, beatings, and excessive force on detainees,’ the report said.

In the months before the attempted arms sale, Swaziland's government declared the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) the main opposition political party a terrorist organisation, and arrested its leader, Mario Masuku.

### **Swazi Government to Blame for Job Cuts**

*28 February 2011*

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has denied it told the Swaziland Government it had to sack people to get the kingdom out of its economic mess.

The IMF said the decision to retrench 7,000 civil servants was taken by the government, not by the IMF.

The IMF also told Barnabas Dlamini, the Swaziland Prime Minister, he and other top earners should take pay cuts rather than sack workers.

Joannes Mongardini, the leader of the IMF delegation to Swaziland, said ‘We have advised that it's better to reduce salaries than to cut employment. The large cuts should come from the top.’

The *Times of Swaziland* reported that top government officials include the positions of the Prime Minister and his cabinet, members of parliament and principal secretaries.

The *Times* reported that the Swazi Government had said it was looking at cutting its workforce by 7,000 through the implementation of the Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR), a move that was believed to be a recommendation from the IMF.

This was disputed by Mongardini, who said the IMF had not given such advice but this was a government decision.

‘Government proposed the 7,000 job cuts, not us. Government came to us with the FAR and we said we were willing to help. This is a home-grown solution,’ Mongardini told journalists.

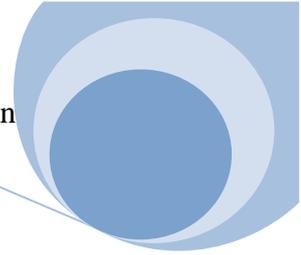
The *Times* reported him saying employment was an important element to people's livelihood and the IMF would not advocate for that to be taken away.

Mongardini said it was up to government to either take the advice or reject it.

‘Don't underestimate how sick the country is. In a few months' time the country may not be able to pay wages. That would be disastrous. It is for the good of the country that we advise the way we do,’ he said.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/23/wikileaks-cables-arms-deal-swaziland>



## Why the IMF Must Ditch Swaziland

28 February 2011

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will tell us this week whether it will support the Swaziland Government's application for a \$US75 million (E525 million) loan from the African Development Bank (ADB). It must say, No.

If it supports the loan, nothing will change in the kingdom. The government will take the money and waste it. When the money has run out – and remember it's just a loan that must be repaid – Swaziland will be a little worse off and the government will get the begging bowl out once again.

Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, said last week that Swaziland loses E80 million each and every month to corruption. At that rate the whole of the ADB loan will be stolen in six months.

Sithole says corruption is endemic in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III. He says government cabinet ministers are among those stealing from the Swazi people.

But it's not just corruption. The whole political system in Swaziland is rotten and does not deliver for the people. Here are some of the things that we know about the financial mismanagement of Swaziland by successive governments, hand-picked by King Mswati.

Perhaps as much as US\$1bn is being wasted on building the Sikhuphe International Airport. Before it started, the IMF warned that Swaziland couldn't afford such a project and that it would take resources away from alleviating poverty.<sup>35</sup> That's exactly what has happened. There is no need for the airport and it is just a vanity project for King Mswati.

The Royal Science and Technology Park that will cost an estimated E850 million (US\$120 million) will deliver nothing to the kingdom and is also another vanity project for the king.<sup>36</sup>

King Mswati III has at least \$US10 billion<sup>37</sup> held 'in trust' for the Swazi nation. He has a personal fortune estimated in 2009 by Forbes to be US\$200 million.<sup>38</sup> What is the point of having money 'in trust' for the nation, if he doesn't use it for that purpose. Let him cut out his lavish lifestyle and use the money to bail out his kingdom.

The Royal Family takes about E300,000 each and every day out of national budget for their own use. Stop these payments and use the money to help the poor.

The national budget is this year allocating E1 billion (about 10 percent of the total budget) to the army and police. This money is being spent mainly to ensure that the Swazi population can be beaten should they rise up demanding political reform.

The Prime Minister and members of parliament awarded themselves massive payoffs totalling E60 million when the next national election comes in 2013. Barnabas Dlamini, the

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/ms/2003/100803.htm>

<sup>36</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/11/new-vanity-project-for-swazi-king.html>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2011-02-18-the-monarchy-in-money>

<sup>38</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/03/vast-cost-of-swazi-royal-family.html>

Prime Minister, will personally get E1.6 million; his deputy, Themba Masuku, who already claims to be a millionaire, is expected to receive E1.4 million.

Each cabinet minister will receive E1.2 million, while Senate President Gelane Zwane and Speaker Prince Guduza stand to pocket E1.1 million each. The four regional administrators will also take home E1.1 million each. The deputy senate president and speaker will each get E495,000. Each of Swaziland's MPs will get E435,000.

Meanwhile, there has been next to no progress in poverty reduction in Swaziland. At the present rate it will take 173 years to get everyone out of poverty. Today, three in ten people are so poor they are under nourished.<sup>39</sup>

I have no doubt that readers could add many more examples to this list.

Swaziland doesn't need financial bail-outs; it needs root and branch political reform. Until now, the governments have been picked and controlled by King Mswati. That must stop. Political parties must be unbanned so that fair elections may be held. Governments must be chosen by the party (parties if a coalition) that wins the most seats. The parties must seek to be elected to government based on their programmes for action. Those programmes must be supported by the people.

King Mswati and his successive governments had no programme, except to keep things as they were for the small elite in Swaziland that was ravaging the kingdom: and then to deliver more of the same. They were content to spend the money we had until it ran out, ensuring along the way that they lined their own pockets and to hell with the rest of the population.

The IMF should not continue support for this. Tell the Swaziland elite this is the end. Stand on your own two feet now. And accept the consequences.

### **King Gets More, His Subjects Get Less**

*1 March 2011*

While budgets controlled by the Swaziland Government are to be slashed by 20 percent this coming year, King Mswati III is to get 23 percent **MORE** from the Swazi people for the upkeep of himself and his Royal Family.

And worse: the cost of King Mswati's has **INCREASED** by 63 percent when compared with what he took from his subjects in 2009/2010.

This information was contained in the budget last week, but the information was carefully kept from the Swazi people.

Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, in his budget speech praised 'their Majesties for their continued support, wisdom, guidance and their insight into the emerging trends brought about by the global economic meltdown. As the socio-economic challenges continue to face the country, their Majesties concern and involvement in joining government to tackle these problems deserves acknowledgement and appreciation.'

<sup>39</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/government-misleads-on-poverty.html>

That's what Sithole said, but it just isn't true. Because, while his subjects are suffering under the cosh of the economic meltdown, King Mswati and his Royal Family are set to get more this year than ever before.

And Minister Sithole knew this, yet he claimed the King had 'concern and involvement' in tackling the economic crisis.

But we are not fooled: the king has no 'concern' for his subjects and his only 'involvement' in the economic crisis is to make sure that he continues to get more than his fair share of Swaziland's wealth, while everybody else suffers.

Sithole carefully avoided giving any information in his speech and media interviews later about how much the king would cost his subjects.

Here are the figures. In the budget the king and his family will get E210 million (US\$30 million). That's E40 million MORE than he got in 2010/2011, when he got E170 million. And it's E80 million MORE than the E129.5 million he got in 2009/2010.

In a speech to the kingdom in January 2011 the king asked his subjects to pray to help get Swaziland out of its economic mess. I'll leave it to readers to decide on an alternative solution . . .

### **IMF Tells Swaziland Some Home Truths**

*3 March 2011*

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation to Swaziland has told the Swazi Government some home truths about the economic mess in the kingdom.

Top of the list is that the crisis is of the government's own making and it is its responsibility - and not the IMF's - to get Swaziland out of it. The government makes the decisions, the only thing the IMF can do is to give advice, Joannes Mongardini, the head of the IMF delegation to Swaziland, said.

'It is up to the government to decide on the ways through which it wants to adjust. We are advising the government to adjust for the next three years,' he said.

He went on, 'We prescribe the solution and it is up to the patient to comply. You can only help a friend if he wants to be helped. But government is now beginning to understand the situation and seeking our advice.'

Mongardini revealed that it was the Swazi Government that had wanted to cut 7,000 civil servants' jobs, and not the IMF. The IMF advised the government wage bill should be cut by 5 per cent; how that was done was up to the government.

'We have advised that it's better to reduce salaries than to cut employment. The large cuts should come from the top,' Mongardini said.

This news surprised many people since the Swazi Government had allowed us to believe the jobs cuts were forced upon it by the IMF.

‘Government proposed the 7,000 job cuts, not us. Government came to us with the FAR [Government’s proposals for getting out of the economic mess] and we said we were willing to help. This is a home-grown solution,’ Mongardini said.

The IMF prefers that the savings should come from wage cuts from top earners. When you realise that those earning the most are the Swaziland Prime Minister, his deputy, cabinet ministers and members of parliament, you can see why the government prefers to see jobs cuts so that other people suffer and not themselves.

The IMF said Tibiyo TakaNgwane should pay tax. Tibiyo was created by Royal Charter in August 1968 by King Sobhuza II. According to the *Times of Swaziland*, at the time of formation it was said that it was being created for government’s national development efforts.

Tibiyo owns the *Swazi Observer* and many investments in property, agriculture and other industries.

What the *Times* didn’t tell us is that these days the money generated from Tibiyo goes to King Mswati III, so the chances of it ever being taxed are remote indeed.

The IMF left Swaziland this week and promised to return soon if there were signs that the Swaziland Government was making a real effort to solve the economic crisis.

It wants to see progress on collecting taxes, reducing the wage bill and abolishing the government’s budgeting and planning committee. If these things are in place by June it is possible that later in 2011 the IMF would support Swaziland’s application to the African Development Bank (ADB) for a US\$75 million (E525 million) loan.

### **Tell the Truth: Swaziland is Broke**

*22 March 2011*

A Swazi cabinet minister has told an international news agency that Swaziland can pay its public service salaries for the rest of the year.

The news came on the day that a different international news agency revealed that the government is so broke it has stopped paying pensions to old folk so that it can afford to pay school fees for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs).

It begs the question who is the government going to steal the money from this time so it can pay the salaries? That, of course, is if we believe the cabinet minister.

So what’s going on?

The cabinet minister first.

Jabulile Mashwama, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, told Reuters news agency today (22 March 2011), ‘The real risk is that we don’t have finance at the moment

sufficient to meet ... needs. But from where we sit now, we will continue to pay salaries. There's no risk not to pay salaries this year,' she told a reporter while at an African investment forum in Dubai

Mashwama claimed the mass protest in Swaziland on Friday<sup>40</sup> that called for the government to resign only happened because there was a 'lack of information' about state finances and unfounded fears that civil servants would not get paid this month

Now, the pensions.

The Swaziland government has suspended this quarter's pensions for the elderly and redirected the money to pay the school fees of the OVCs, the IRIN news agency reported today.<sup>41</sup>

'Government] will utilize the funds allocated for the elderly grants, since they have R46 million (US\$6.5 million) in that account currently, with a view that it shall be reimbursed timeously,' said a finance ministry report to parliament explaining how the R38 million (US\$5.4 million) bill for OVC school fees would be met.

The remaining US\$1.15 million in the account was not enough to cover the quarterly pension payout due in March and it was therefore suspended.

About 5 percent of Swaziland's approximately one million people are 60 years old or older and eligible for pensions. Roughly two-thirds of Swazis live below the poverty line.

IRIN reported that the pensions are indispensable for many of the elderly, as there is no alternative form of social security and private sector pensions are rare. The grants were increased two years ago from US\$21 per quarter to US\$85 and are paid four times a year.

But a loaf of bread costs about US\$1, so most people subsist on maize-meal, supplemented by wild spinach, edible herbs, emasi (sour milk) and occasionally meat.

Two weeks ago it was revealed that the government had taken pension subscriptions from teachers' salaries but had kept the money to pay its day-to-day bills.<sup>42</sup>

Earlier this month, nurses had to strike to force the government to pay them their overdue allowances. The government caved in.<sup>43</sup>

So what's going on? It is clear to anyone that the government is completely out of control over its finances and is lurching from crisis to crisis. The government stole from the elderly to pay for the children because it couldn't think of anything else to do.

The government thinks it has gotten out of a hole and bought itself another few weeks time before the next crisis comes. But it hasn't.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/bbc-report-on-swaziland-protest.html>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=92263>

<sup>42</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/government-promises-ring-hollow.html>

<sup>43</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-is-military-state.html>

Mashwama's claim that salaries will be paid until at least the end of the year cannot be trusted. Why won't the government admit it: it has run the kingdom into the ground and Swaziland has virtually run out of cash?

That's the truth. It's only a matter of time before the people realise it. Then all hell will break loose.

### **Still No Sacrifice From Swazi King**

*25 March 2011*

As King Mswati III of Swaziland takes a 23percent INCREASE for himself and his royal family, the cabinet ministers he appointed have been forced to take a 10 percent pay CUT.

News of the ministers' salary reduction was announced by Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's Prime Minister, in a statement today (25 March 2011).

But, the increase for King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, has never been revealed to his subjects by politicians by the local media.

Dlamini was forced against his wishes and those of his cabinet colleagues to accept the pay cut because Swaziland is on the verge of economic meltdown. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced it would not support Swaziland's application for a loan so it could pay its bills, unless a raft of financial measures were taken, including the pay cut. Pay will also be frozen for three years.

The PM, who is currently paid a basic salary of E52,941.42 monthly (US\$7,000), will have his pay reduced by E5,294.14 to E47,647.28. By contrast, seven in ten of King Mswati's subjects earn less than US\$2 a day. The average teacher's salary is E7,000 a month.

Dlamini said he wanted MPs and public servants, including nurses and teachers, to also take a 10 percent pay cut. 'There clearly needs to be an appropriate level of sacrifice within the civil service and Parliament to reduce the payroll cost to a manageable level,' the PM said in his statement.

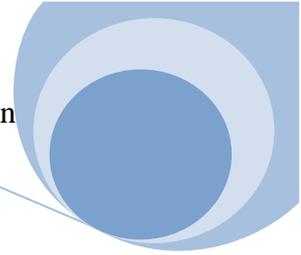
He made no call for King Mswati to also make his 'sacrifice'. And, the King has made no offer to reduce the amount of money he takes from his subjects to fund his lavish lifestyle that includes at least 13 palaces.

The Prime Minister's 'sacrifice' is hollow. He has not agreed to give up the E1.6 million payoff he will receive in 2013 as a gratuity when the present parliament ends.<sup>44</sup> His deputy Themba Masuku will get E1.4 million and in total politicians will get more than E60 million between them in severance pay from the taxpayer.

Nor, is King Mswati short of a dollar. In 2009, Forbes estimated he had a personal fortune worth US\$200 million.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/swazi-gvt-gives-self-massive-payoff.html>

<sup>45</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/07/swaziland-king-keeps-coining-it-in.html>



## **King Calls for Others to Make Sacrifice**

26 March 2011

King Mswati III, who has taken a 23 percent increase in his budget while pensions for the destitute elderly have been suspended due to lack of government cash, has made a fresh call on his subjects to make a sacrifice to get his kingdom out of the economic mire.

But, once again, he continues to exclude himself and his royal family from the sacrifice.

In what was described as a ‘conversation’ with one of the newspapers he in effect owns, King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, said, ‘We need to work even harder and sacrifice even more today for a better tomorrow.’

But, his wasn’t the Royal ‘We’: this was most definitely a Royal ‘You’.

King Mswati said everyone should play a part in putting the wagon back on track.

But, while he calls on his subjects – seven in ten earn less than US\$2 a day and three in ten are malnourished – to sacrifice, he continues to coin it in at the Swazi people’s expense.

In the national budget revealed in February, the King and his family got E210 million (US\$30 million). That’s E40 million more than he got in 2010/2011, when he got E170 million. And it’s E80 million more than the E129.5 million he got in 2009/2010. That means he’s had a 63 percent increase since 2009.

These details about the cost to the Swazi people of King Mswati and his Royal Family have been kept from his subjects. No media in Swaziland have made mention of them, even though the information was published on blog sites and Facebook before being taken up by the international media.

The King also has a personal fortune, estimated by Forbes in 2009, to be US\$200 million.

King Mswati told the *Weekend Observer* in an interview published today (26 March 2011) that a new ‘launch pad’ was needed for ‘an economic revolution’.

He said, ‘This calls for unity of purpose more than ever. It helps no one to go to the streets and cause disruption in times when the country is buckling under the pressure of the economic downturn. We need to work even harder and sacrifice even more today for a better tomorrow. The storms shall pass for sure, but the period they will last will depend solely on our actions as a nation.’

Last Friday, an estimated 8,000 people marched in Mbabane, the Swazi capital, to demand the government resigns. Many of the marchers were also calling for the end of the monarchy.

King Mswati said, ‘What the country needs right now is not protests or militant revolution, but an economic revolution to focus on reviving the economy, raising the income of Swazis through employment creation, putting food on the people’s table and launching a concerted and decisive onslaught on poverty.’

The king gave no indication to the newspaper about what he would be doing to help achieve this 'economic revolution'.

### **MPs Refuse to Cut Their Pay**

26 March 2011

Swaziland's Members of parliament (MPs) have refused to follow cabinet ministers and take a 10 percent cut in salary.

The cut would have saved about E6 million per year to help get Swaziland out of its economic mess. The Government expects all public servants to take a 10 percent cut.

According to the *Swazi News* today (26 March 2011), MPs told a special cabinet committee formed to discuss the proposal that the amount saved was a far cry from the E80 million per month that Majozi Sithole, the Minister of Finance, said was lost by government through corruption.

The MPs' decision to hold on to their pay did not impress Vincent Dlamini, Secretary General of the National Public Services Workers Union (NAPSAWU), who told the *Swazi News* they weren't worth their salaries and were earning money they did not deserve.

Meanwhile, ordinary Swazi people are less than impressed with the Swazi cabinet's announcement that ministers would take a 10 percent pay cut. Cabinet ministers have a wide range of perks, including massive severance payouts to look forward to when the present parliament ends in 2013. These are not affected by the cut.

The perks were set out in an official document called the Finance Circular No. 1 of 2010. Here are some of its main provisions (courtesy of the *Weekend Observer*):<sup>46</sup>

#### **Constituency allowance:**

The Prime Minister and his deputy despite not having a known constituency, are paid 12.5% of their basic salary as constituency allowance.

Others who are paid at the same rate are ministers, presiding officers, MPs, Senators, Regional Administrators (RAs).

#### **Entertainment allowance:**

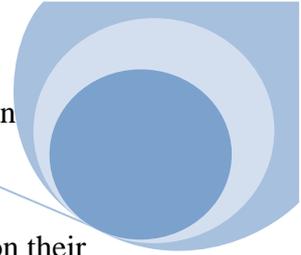
Prime Minister, his deputy, ministers, RAs', presiding officers, MPs including Senators and Tindvuna TetiNkhundla are paid entertainment allowance at a scale of 7.5% of their basic pay.

#### **Housing benefit:**

Prime Minister, his deputy, minister, presiding officers and RAs are entitled to a housing loan of up to E1.5 million at a maximum of 8% interest for up to 10 years to be arranged by government. MPs and the rest are entitled to a E650,000 loan at a maximum of 8% interest payable over five years.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=22824>



**Tax reimbursement:**

The intention of this allowance is to assist cabinet members with the payment of tax on their benefits. These allowances are paid to compensate for legitimate expenditure in the nature of their duties. The Prime Minister and his team get a 10% reimbursement of basic pay annually. No other politician enjoys this benefit other than themselves.

**Utilities:**

The circular gives the Prime Minister and his deputy the privilege of having their water, electricity and municipal rates paid for by government for official residence and one private home. Ministers and RAs only enjoy water, electricity and municipal rates paid for by government. Presiding officers and deputy presiding officers only get an allowance of 5% of their basic pay in turn.

**Vehicles:**

The Prime Minister and deputy prime minister are provided with official vehicles. They are also to receive an annual capital allowance of E120,000 to enable them purchase equivalent vehicles for their private use. The capital allowance shall be equal to that of cabinet ministers. On leaving office or dissolution, whichever comes first, they will get a cash payment equivalent to the value of their benchmark vehicles less the capital allowance over the period. Further the PM is entitled to a requisition of government truck up to 12 times a year for the transportation of bulk goods within Swaziland. Meanwhile ministers are paid E120,000 annually as capital allowance and a further E74,063 as maintenance allowance

**Funeral assistance:**

PM is covered for E80,000 whilst given E30,000 as assistance allowance in case of his spouse's demise.

DPM funeral costs are covered for E7,000 and would get E20,000 assistance for spouse.

Minister is covered for E60,000 and E12 000 funeral assistance for spouse.

Presiding officers are covered for E40,000 and no mention for spouse.

Deputy minister, RA, deputy presiding officer are covered for E30,000.

MPs are only covered for E20,000.

**Benefits for ex-PM and their spouses:**

Ex-PM who is not under formal employment gets E10,000 monthly.

Ex-PM spouse whose husbands died gets E5,000 monthly.

Ex-PM would get E80,000 funeral assistance and their spouses covered at E30,000.

**King Mswati is Rich, But Swaziland is Not**

*1 April 2011*

While Swaziland struggles to alleviate its fiscal crisis without foreign aid because of its World Bank classification as a lower middle-income country, the government has increased the budget for King Mswati III, Africa's last remaining absolute monarch and one of the richest royals in the world.

This move came despite figures showing that while the number of people living on less than two dollars a day has dropped by six percent between 2001 and 2010, the welfare of the

poorest people, which make up 30 percent of the population, has not improved, the IPS news agency reported.<sup>47</sup>

Pat Muir, principal secretary at the Ministry of Education and Training, says, 'The country's World Bank classification makes it impossible for us to partner with international organisations that could assist us with some of our services.'

When the government sets out to raise foreign aid, donors always remind Mbabane that Swaziland is not regarded as a country poor enough to 'deserve' much of this kind of assistance, notes Muir.

Majozi Sithole, Swazi Finance Minister, decries the skewed distribution of wealth in the kingdom, which contributes to the kingdom being classified as a lower middle-income state. This status is based on an elite representing only 10 percent of the population but controlling 60 percent of the country's wealth.

Swaziland's lower middle-income status also presents a problem to civil society organisations as donors' focus shifted to least developed countries.

According to Emmanuel Ndlangamandla, the director for the Coordinating Assembly for Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO), foreign aid to Swaziland started to dry up from the 1990s.

'Since then, NGOs have been downscaling operations because donors are not interested in funding Swaziland because of its lower middle-income status,' says Ndlangamandla.

What has further compounded the problem, states Khangezile Dlamini, the general secretary for Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC), is the system of governance that breeds corruption and does not allow transparency.

'Donors tell us that government hosts the king's birthday celebrations every year, yet it fails to provide for its poor people,' said Dlamini. Despite the fiscal crisis, government still plans to host the king's birthday celebrations on 19 April.

She said CSC had to discontinue a programme where the organisation was installing boreholes for poor communities in drought-prone areas. 'Our donors told us that government should be responsible for providing these services to its people.'

### **Swazi PM Misleads on IMF Decision**

*9 April 2011*

Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's illegally-appointed Prime Minister,<sup>48</sup> is misleading people into believing that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is close to offering formal support to help the kingdom out of its economic meltdown.

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<sup>47</sup> <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=55084>

<sup>48</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/swazi-king-appoints-illegal-pm.html>

He called a press conference yesterday (8 April 2011) to announce that the IMF had agreed to help Swaziland through its 'Staff-Monitoring Programme' (SMP) to implement the government's Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap – its plan to save Swaziland's economy.

Dlamini said, 'Most significantly, it [the IMF decision] will send a clear and unchallengeable signal, to potential lenders, of government's total commitment to the Roadmap.'

But that's not what the IMF actually said. The SMP, which is how the IMF monitors progress of the government in tackling the economic mess, has been talked about for many months now. All that is new is that the IMF has now officially confirmed that the SMP is in place.

An official IMF publication<sup>49</sup> released yesterday said, 'The [SMP] program entails IMF staff scrutiny of the authorities' policies, but does not include formal backing of the program or any financial support.'

The IMF said, 'Approval of this agreement does not represent endorsement of the program by the IMF Executive Board or involve IMF financing.'

So there you have it: no formal backing and no financial support. Not much progress really.

So what is the Prime Minister's game? With only five days before mass demonstrations take place in Swaziland to protest at the government's mismanagement of the economy; did he intend to mislead Swazi people into believing that the crisis was nearly over?

### **Is IMF Letter Lost in the Post?**

*27 April 2011*

So where is the letter of comfort Barnabas Dlamini promised us he had received from the International Monetary Fund?

In a blaze of publicity he confidently told the Swazi kingdom that he had received the letter from the IMF and this meant that it supported his government's bid to get a loan of about US\$100 million from the African Development Bank.

He told an excited press conference on 8 April 2011 that the letter would be ready within two weeks. Those two weeks were up last Friday (23 April 2011), but no letter has been forthcoming.

Significantly, the IMF itself – no stranger to self-publicity – has made no public reference to the existence of such a letter. In fact, the IMF has repeatedly stated that although it wants to help Swaziland come up with a solution to its financial meltdown this assistance should not be read as 'formal backing of the program or financial support.'<sup>50</sup>

Dlamini trumpeted his triumph at securing the letter. At the press conference he was reported saying, 'It will ensure that government is able to meet its responsibilities for pensions for the

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2011/car040811a.htm>

<sup>50</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/waiting-for-imf-letter-of-comfort.html>

elderly, school programmes for orphans and vulnerable children and the national health services, which include HIV and AIDS Response.’

The triumph was also reported internationally.

But less than a week after Dlamini’s press conference, but not connected to it, the IMF put out a further statement<sup>51</sup> about Swaziland. It said, ‘The IMF Managing Director approved a Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) with Swaziland on April 4, 2011, that seeks to start the necessary fiscal adjustment, while protecting education, health, and pro-poor spending and improving public financial management.’

It added, ‘The SMP will cover the period January-June 2011.’

Or put simply, this says the IMF will continue to monitor the Swazi government’s handling of the economy until June 2011 and then decide what to do next.

No letter of comfort mentioned by the IMF.

So what’s going on? Is it just a coincidence that at the time of the announcement Dlamini was under pressure from trade unions and civil society generally for his mishandling of the economy? A protest petition had been delivered to him two weeks earlier demanding that he and his entire cabinet resign.

Dlamini’s announcement also came just four days before more street protests were planned against him and the government hand-picked by King Mswati III that he leads.

Barnabas Dlamini must produce this letter of comfort immediately, to demonstrate that he really does have the support from the IMF for the bank loan that he claims.

If he doesn’t show us the letter, the Swazi people might come to this conclusion: the PM wasn’t telling them the truth.

Or there might just be one other explanation. The statement issued by the IMF on 14 April 2011 was titled an ‘assessment letter’ (that is a letter assessing the present situation in Swaziland). It was published after Dlamini’s press conference and within his 14 days deadline.

Could it just be that Barnabas Dlamini is so inept that he thought this letter was a letter of comfort?

### **Not Much Comfort From IMF**

*2 May 2011*

If this is a letter of support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), I’d hate to see a rejection.

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=4561>

Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's Prime Minister, held a press conference widely reported in the Swazi media on Friday (29 April 2011), to announce he had received a 'letter of comfort' from the IMF and he was now in a position to go to the African Development Bank for a loan – possibly for as much as \$US150 million, according to a report in the *Times of Swaziland*.

The *Times* reported, 'The Prime Minister said the letter of comfort will provide an important degree of assurance to governments, and international and local organisations and financial institutions.'

Following the publication of these newspaper reports, we at Swazi Media Commentary were a little confused. What exactly did this 'letter of comfort' say? We contacted the IMF and were told the only letter that had been given to the government was an 'assessment letter'<sup>52</sup> dated 14 April 2011.

So what is this letter? This is what it says in the first paragraph, '*This letter provides an assessment of recent macroeconomic developments in Swaziland and an update on the discussions between IMF staff and the Swaziland authorities.*'

Nowhere does it say the IMF supports Swaziland's bid for a loan.

It does, however, give an assessment of the economic situation in Swaziland as of April 2011.

Here are some excerpts.

*'IMF staff considers the revenue projections in the budget optimistic and called for additional measures to reduce recurrent expenditures.'* **Or put another way, the government got its sums wrong on how much it was likely to get in income and therefore the IMF wants more public expenditure cuts.**

*'While capital expenditure commitments have been halved in recent months to offset the impact of lower Southern African Customs Union (SACU) revenue, this was partly reversed by a supplementary budget in November 2010 to regularize capital expenditure overruns of about E 350 million (1.3 percent of GDP) for a new airport project.'* **That means the government is wasting money on unnecessary expenditure. The airport project refers to Sikhuphe Airport, King Mswati III's vanity project.**

*'The government is facing serious challenges in financing its large fiscal deficit. In addition to issuing government bonds, the government has drawn down its deposits at the central bank and has incurred large domestic payment arrears, estimated at E 1.2 billion (US\$150 million; 4 percent of GDP) at end-March 2011. The central bank has also provided the government with an emergency credit line of E 620 million (2.3 percent of GDP) in February 2011. Arrears are likely to rise further in the coming months, before external budget support becomes available in the second half of 2011. In addition, the government may not be in a position to pay public sector wages in the next few months, without further drawing on the gross international reserves of the central bank.'* **That means the government hasn't got enough money to pay its bills – including the wages and salaries of public servants.**

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=4561>

*'Given the size of the fiscal deficit, the government will not be in a position to rely exclusively on domestic resources to finance its operations. Consequently, there is still a financing gap of about E 1.3 billion (about US\$200 million), which the authorities hope to close through external assistance from the international community.'* **This means the government needs an international loan.**

You will notice that nowhere does the IMF say it supports the application for a loan, only that the Swaziland Government wants one.

So what happens next? Majazi Sithole, the Swaziland Finance Minister, told the press conference he was going to contact the African Development Bank again to ask for a loan.

This is where we were in October 2010, when Swaziland's economic meltdown first became public.

### **No Bandages at Hospital, but the King Parties**

*7 May 2011*

Swaziland's most prestigious public hospital has been without bandages for two weeks.

Patients are being 'forced to sleep with their wounds open and leaking'.

Others are made to buy their own bandages and those who can't afford them are forced to go home untreated.

All wards in Mbabane Government Hospital are without bandages for the second consecutive week, the *Weekend Observer* reported today (7 May 2011).

Nurses said 'dozens and dozens' of patients who needed treatment had been turned away.

When sought for comment by the newspaper, Dr Stephen Shongwe, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health, said 'He was not aware of this matter, and wondered how it could happen that an entire hospital was out of crucial material like bandages.'

How could it happen? Swaziland is in the grip of an economic meltdown and even though the government, handpicked by King Mswati III, promised the 20 percent public expenditure cuts it demanded from departments would not impact on health services, it has.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is in town at present to look over Swaziland's books to see if the economy is being run well enough for the Swazi Government to be granted a loan to help it out of its mess.

I hope the IMF asks the government why it hasn't kept its promises about health care.

While it's asking questions, the IMF could also talk about spending priorities in the kingdom.

While patients at Mbabane Government Hospital went without bandages, King Mswati jetted off to London for the British Royal Wedding.

Reliable sources say the private jet he used to get to the UK cost E4.7 million (US\$700,000).<sup>53</sup> He stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel, London, for nearly a week, where the cheapest room is E5,400 (US\$800) per night (and I doubt that he stayed in the cheapest room).<sup>54</sup> He is widely reported to have taken 50 people with him on the trip. This figure is disputed, but the AFP news agency reported an eyewitness who saw 15 to 20 people getting on the jet before it left Matsapha Airport.<sup>55</sup>

By my calculation that's at least E5.3 million spent on the trip of King Mswati. That sum would have bought a heck of a lot of bandages.

### **Official: Swaziland Can't Pay Its Wages**

*10 May 2011*

At last, the Swaziland Government has confessed. It cannot pay its public service salaries.

It is possible that the May payment will not be made – and there is definitely no money to pay salaries after that.

And, Majosi Sithole, Swaziland's Finance Minister for the past 10 years and a key player in the government actions that has brought Swaziland to its economic knees, also admitted that the so-called 'Letter of Comfort' the Government says it has received from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will not automatically mean that it will get a loan from international banks.

Without the loan, Swaziland will in effect be bankrupt. And even if it did get the loan the money wouldn't be released until at least July 2011.

Sithole made his revelation on state-run SBIS radio yesterday (9 May 2011).

The *Times of Swaziland* reported today that Sithole told listeners it would be difficult to pay salaries in May, but impossible for June and beyond. There are between 30,000 and 35,000 public servants in Swaziland.

The *Times* said, 'Since openly acknowledging that it is faced with a fiscal crisis, government has, for months, said civil servants' salaries are a priority and would be guaranteed.'

Sithole said that Government revenue collections were not enough to meet the wage bills. He refused to say if the government would try to get loans from banks in Swaziland to pay the bills. In February 2011 when it last tried to raise money this way through bonds it could only sell one-fifth of the number it needed.<sup>56</sup>

He also refused to say if the government had contingency plans if the banks did not bail him out.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/kings-plane-hire-cost-700000.html>

<sup>54</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/swazi-king-mswati-has-no-shame.html>

<sup>55</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/private-jet-takes-king-to-wedding.html>

<sup>56</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/financial-markets-snub-swaziland.html>

The *Swazi Observer* reported Sithole saying even though Swaziland had received the letter of comfort from the IMF which makes it eligible to be get credit from international financiers such as the World Bank, that process was not automatic.

### **U-Turn on Public Servants' Pay**

*12 May 2011*

Can we believe a word Majozi Sithole, Swaziland's Finance Minister says?

First he tells us that there will be no money to pay the salaries of public servants in June and then he says it will be there – he'll get the money by collecting fines from criminals and taxes.

News of Sithole's confession that Swaziland was broke flashed around the world on Tuesday (10 May 2011). Swazi trade unions called on the government to resign<sup>57</sup> and said there would be chaos and a strike if the salaries weren't paid.<sup>58</sup>

Then, like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat, Sithole announces to the media that the money was there after all.

The *Times of Swaziland* reports today (12 May 2011) that Sithole says he can collect E300 million a month in taxes and the rest will come from collecting fines and he hopes to get the Swaziland Central Bank to cough up some cash.

But, it seems like a bit of a wing and a prayer to me. By his own admission, the government salary bill is E323 million per month and 'about E540 million is needed for the running of ministries'.

The *Times* reports him saying, 'We get about E300 million per month from the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA) from tax collections. We also get some funds from bonds and Treasury Bills.

'However, all these funds are not enough to cater for all of government's expenses, which is why we want understanding from all concerned in the event we are not able to pay on time.

'About E323 million goes to salaries, about E540 million is needed for the running of ministries. We also have to pay the country's external debt, which is also a priority followed by salaries for civil servants then the other debt.'

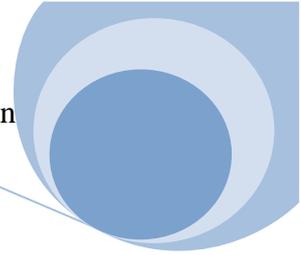
But, he assured the *Times*, civil servants would get paid.

But, can we believe him? There are a lot of things that can go wrong with his plan. The tax has to be collected, the Central Bank has to convince investors their money is safe with the Swaziland Government ... and a heck of a lot of drunk drivers have to be caught this weekend.

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<sup>57</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/unions-demand-cabinet-go-now.html>

<sup>58</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/no-pay-will-lead-to-strike.html>



## Swazi Economy Plan in Tatters

16 May 2011

A major part of the Swaziland Government's economic recovery plan is in tatters as politicians and public servants are refusing to take pay cuts.

The government was looking for cuts of 10 percent to help it out of the economic mess it has created. It even told the International Monetary Fund (IMF) it would make the cuts to secure a US\$125 million-plus loan from the African Development Bank and other international financiers.

But, in truth the Swazi Government isn't able to come up with the goods.

Today (16 May 2011), it is revealed that principle secretaries – the most senior civil servants in government departments - are refusing to follow the government line.

According to the *Times of Swaziland*, they won't take the cuts because they are angry that MPs and ministers will receive huge payoffs at the next national election in 2013, but they will not.

They want the so-called Circular No 1 that details the politicians' perks also to apply to them.

They also say the government hasn't negotiated with them over pay cuts.

They are not alone in snubbing the government Swazi senators have already said they will not take the cut.<sup>59</sup> They said proper procedures had not been followed.

Lower grade civil servants are also against the cuts. Instead they are arguing with government that they should get a 4.5 percent INCREASE to cover the rising cost of living.

Vincent Dlamini, Secretary General of the National Public Service Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU), said if the government was serious about expenditure cuts it would withdraw Circular No 1.

He said the circular awarded politicians too much money and that was why Swaziland was in an economic mess.

Cabinet ministers have agreed to take the cut, but some did so against their will. They said they couldn't afford to take pay cuts and instead they should receive more.

So where does this leave the government's economic plan? It had agreed spending cuts with the IMF in return for a so-called 'letter of comfort' from it. The government claims to have this letter and is now talking with international financial institutions for loans. But, without the salary cuts in place, the governments so-called Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR) – its recovery plan - is unworkable.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/swazi-senate-fights-own-pay-cut.html>

Time is running out for the government. Majozi Sithole, Swaziland's Finance Minister, has already admitted it would be hard to pay public service salaries in June and the months after without the loan in place.

### **Tax Increases 'Will Close Businesses'**

*17 May 2011*

The Swaziland Government has received another blow to its economic recovery plan, with a claim from a top business leader that its tax policy will force businesses to close.

The government needs cash to pay public servants' salaries and also to demonstrate to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the global financial institutions that it is able to run an economy.

As the Swazi economy approaches critical meltdown, the government put forward its 'Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR),' aimed at putting the economy on an even keel.

A major part of the FAR is collecting extra taxes from business.

But a Swazi business leader said there will be immediate closures of companies if tax rises go ahead.

Reuters news agency reports Hezekiel Mabuza, deputy president of the Federation of the Swaziland Business Community, saying the government has introduced new taxes which have worsened the plight of businesses already hit by the withdrawal of state contracts that had sustained them.

'Some of these businesses that had contracts with the government ... have got no other markets that can sustain their businesses. So definitely they have to close down,' Mabuza said.

'Added to that, the new taxes have a negative impact on businesses that exist because their revenue is already down due to the economic crisis,' he added.

About 40 businesses, or 10 percent of his organisation's membership, had indicated they would go under, Mabuza said, adding the tally could be higher.

The property sector was among the hardest hit as companies discontinued rentals of business premises.

Unemployment in Swaziland is about 40 percent, and 70 percent of the population of about 1 million live in abject poverty.

This blow to the Swazi Government's hopes of convincing the likes of the African Development Bank and the World Bank it is capable of running an economy and therefore should be granted loans in the region of US\$125 million-plus, follows news that some politicians and all civil servants are refusing to take 10 percent pay cuts that are also part of the FAR.

Time is running out for the government as it is expected it will not be able to pay civil service salaries in June unless it gets an increase in tax revenue.

### **Did Swazi PM Lie About IMF Support?**

*19 May 2011*

Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's Prime Minister, must explain to the Swazi people why he claimed that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) supported his economic management of the kingdom, when it is now clear it does not.

Yesterday (18 May 2011), after spending 14 days in Swaziland the IMF announced that Swaziland's so-called Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap – its economic recovery plan – was not working because the Swazi Government had failed to meet targets it set itself.

In a statement, the IMF said, two fiscal targets were missed, 'on domestic payment arrears, by E59 million (0.2 percent of GDP)'.<sup>60</sup>

And, 'The target on the net international reserves of the central bank was also missed by US\$34 million.'

What this means is that the government failed to cut public service salaries by wage bill by E240 million, (about 10 percent) or alternatively to retrench 7,000 public servants to save the money.

Also missed was the government's commitment to table an important income tax order to parliament by the end of April. This would have allowed it to collect more taxes than at present. The government used money reserves at the Central Bank of Swaziland to pay its bills – and left many simply, unpaid.

What all this means is that Swaziland will not have met its own targets by the end of June – the time Dlamini and Majozi Sithole, the Finance Minister, had confidently claimed they would be able to go to the African Development Bank and other international financial institutions for US\$125 million-plus loans to pay public service salaries and other commitments during the coming months, to give it time to put the rest of its economic recovery package in place.

Now, the IMF states, it will continue to monitor how the economy is run in Swaziland and will reassess the situation in August 2011.

In summary, the IMF said the government has a 'severe liquidity' problem – it doesn't have money to pay its bills.

'In this context, the [IMF] mission advised the government to take immediate measures to cut expenditure and mobilize additional financing in order to avoid the accumulation of additional payment arrears, including on wages,' it said.

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2011/pr11186.html>

‘A large fiscal adjustment is needed to bring the program back on track and reduce the fiscal deficit in line with available financing. The authorities and the mission have identified E600 million (2 percent of GDP) in spending cuts that could be implemented swiftly to improve the fiscal situation.’

So how was Dlamini able to pass this disaster off as a success? Earlier this month (May 2011), he and Sithole confidently said they had received a ‘letter of comfort’ from the IMF and this would enable them to get loans from international banks.

As I wrote before<sup>61</sup> the so-called comfort letter did not say it supported a loan. This latest revelation that the Swaziland Government is unable to meet its own targets for expenditure cuts and revenue collection should suggest to international banks that it would be a high risk to lend money to Swaziland.

And without the loans, Swaziland will run out of cash. Sithole has already said that it would be doubtful if it could meet public sector salary payments in June. He also said that after June things would be easier because of the bank loans.

Those loans are unlikely to be forthcoming in June. So we can expect mass anti-government action.

And as for Prime Minister Dlamini: with his false claims about IMF success, he has shown he can’t be trusted to tell us the truth. The time has come for him to step aside.

### **Government Will Waste Loan Money**

*25 May 2011*

What exactly is the Swaziland Government going to do with the US\$100 million (E1 billion) loan it hopes to get from the African Development Bank (ADB)?

The Swazi House of Assembly has tabled a bill that allows it to seek out the loan and gives some details of the terms and conditions that will be placed on the Swazi people in trying to pay the money back.

But nowhere does the government say how its money will be spent. The best it can come up with is that the billion will be ‘for the provision of a budget support and for matters incidental thereto’. The money will be kept in the consolidated fund. The consolidated fund is in effect the government’s chequebook account and the money will be used as and when the government sees fit.

Since no more detailed plans have been announced we must assume that the billion will not be invested in something that will generate income in the future; instead it will be used to pay off government bills.

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<sup>61</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/not-much-comfort-from-imf.html>

The loan is probably intended to keep the government afloat while its so-called Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR) kicks in. The FAR is a collection of expenditure cutting and revenue gaining measures that are meant to bring Swaziland's near-dead economy back to life.

But, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said earlier this month (May 2011), the Swazi Government has so far failed to meet its own targets to cut spending cuts and collect revenue. And, with public servants adamant they will not accept pay cuts; there is not much hope of much change soon.

So back to the one billion: if (and it's still a big 'if' following the last IMF progress report)<sup>62</sup> the ADB hands over the money, it won't go very far in Swaziland.

Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, said this month the government salary bill was E323 million per month and 'about E540 million is needed for the running of ministries'.

By my calculation that means the ADB loan is enough to keep the government running for about four months. Maybe it can stretch out a little longer, but unless the government cuts its expenditure and increases revenue now, it won't go much further.

The House of Assembly was told on Monday (23 May 2011) that the loan would have to be repaid over 20 years. That's 20 years of debt for four months' respite for the government. We all know this government appointed by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, is incompetent and will waste any loan it is given. It would be better for the Swazi people if the ADB (and other global financial institutions) turned Swaziland's loan down and insisted on political reforms as well as financial reforms before it would entertain a revised application.

### **IMF Letter is no Comfort at All**

*29 May 2011*

I suppose we should be grateful that journalists in Swaziland have at last woken up to the fact that Barnabas Dlamini, the kingdom's Prime Minister and Majozi Sithole, his hopeless Finance Minister, have been telling lies about the extent of the support they have from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for their plans to save the Swazi economy from meltdown.

The *Times Sunday* reports today (29 May 2011) that the 'Letter of Comfort' the IMF was alleged to have given the government to enable it to seek loans from international financial institutions was only a letter assessing what the government was trying to achieve in its so-called Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap for the economy.

Rather dramatically (as if to suggest that the newspaper has found out something nobody else knew) the newspaper reports it has the letter of assessment in its possession.

But the letter has been freely available on the Internet since mid-April 2011. The *Times* and other journalists in Swaziland had it available when the Prime Minister made his outlandish

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<sup>62</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/imf-thumbs-down-for-swaziland.html>

claims about support from the IMF. But these are Swazi journalists after all and instead of reporting the contents of the letter they chose instead simply to report unquestioned the statements by Dlamini and Sithole.

Readers of Swazi Media Commentary would however have known since early April 2011 that the government was lying about the support. And since journalists throughout Swaziland read this blog, it is a wonder why suddenly today – six weeks too late – they start to tell the Swazi people what's really going on.

### **Teachers: Freeze Ministers' Bank Accounts**

*1 June 2011*

The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) is demanding that money stolen by Swazi politicians and hidden in foreign banks should be frozen.

Teachers believe top government officials, including cabinet ministers and high-ranking civil servants, have corruptly amassed money that properly belongs to the Swazi people.

The demand was contained in a petition due to be delivered today (1 June 2011) in Swaziland to the United States Embassy, the South African High Commission, Swazi cabinet offices and the Ministry of Finance.

Muzi Mhlanga, SNAT Secretary-General, is reported by the *Times of Swaziland* saying, 'We want a freeze of the money belonging to certain individuals who steal and hide it in foreign banks that are in countries like Switzerland and the United States.'

The teachers who are staging the first of regular monthly one-day protests are also demanding that the South African and American governments stop supporting the undemocratic Swazi political system, known as Tinkhundla.

'The Tinkhundla system shouldn't be supported because of its corruption and mismanagement of funds. We want South Africa and America to help Swaziland democratise. We want a peaceful transition to democracy,' Mhlanga told the *Times*.

As the teachers deliver the petitions in today's scheduled one-day protest, schools are anticipated to close as SNAT expects all its members of be part of the action.

### **Observer Bows Down to the King**

*15 June 2011*

Would the Swazi Observer have published this 'retraction' if King Mswati's trip to South Africa to secure a loan had been a success?<sup>63</sup>

### **RETRACTION**

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<sup>63</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=26043>

In the *Weekend Observer* (June 11, 2011) we reported that His Majesty King Mswati III left for South Africa to seek a E10 billion bail out loan from the South African government. It has been brought to our attention that this is not true. We unreservedly retract the story in its entirety and offer our apologies to His Majesty King Mswati III, government and the entire Swazi Nation for the misleading and false report. Editorial Board.

### **Swazi Lies Over South African Loan**

*22 June 2011*

Despite denials from the Swaziland Government it is now been admitted that King Mswati III has asked South Africa for money to bail out his bankrupt kingdom.

Bloomberg financial news agency reports today (22 June 2011) that South Africa's National Treasury is 'dealing with' a request for help from Swaziland. Swaziland may not have money to pay its public servants.<sup>64</sup>

It quotes Jerry Matjila, the director-general of South Africa's international relations department, saying a request has been made and it is being considered.

Matjila told a group of lawyers in Cape Town that South Africa risked an inflow of immigrants from Swaziland if the Swazi Government's financial crisis is not resolved.

He told them, 'The question is how much we can help. We want a stable continent. We start with our neighbors.'

It was widely reported earlier this month (June 2011) that King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, had sought a meeting with Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, to personally ask for a loan for his kingdom of E10 billion (about US\$1 billion).

It was reported that Zuma demanded that King Mswati allow political parties in his kingdom and that he personally kept out of politics. The King refused to accept these conditions and the meeting did not take place.

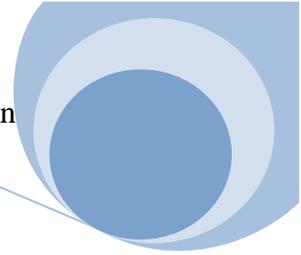
The Swaziland Government later denied that any approach had been made by Swaziland to South Africa for financial assistance. The *Swazi Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, was forced to make a humiliating public apology to the king after it published a report that had previously appeared in the *Southern Africa Report* giving details of the required loan.

Matjila's comments today seem to show that that the Swaziland Government and the King's denials were lies.

Swaziland is expecting a decision any day now on an application for a loan of US\$100 million it has made to the African Development Bank.

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-06-22/swaziland-asks-south-africa-to-help-solve-financial-problems.html>



## **Swazi Cancer Patients Sent Home**

*25 June 2011*

More than 300 Swazi cancer patients being treated in South African hospitals have been sent home according to Swaziland the Cancer Association of Swaziland, (CANASWA), after the government of King Mswati III could not meet their medical costs, the news agency IRIN reports.<sup>65</sup>

Swaziland is experiencing acute financial pressures. ‘The entire fleet of [government] cars, except for emergency vehicles’ and those used by the security services, has been grounded, said an official who declined to be identified. The other exception is transport for Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch.

The government is the country’s largest employer. Social services are being cut and public servants may not be paid after the end of June 2011. One fuel supplier alone is owed R17 million (US\$2.42 million) and the lack of transport is constraining the activities of government personnel from agricultural field officers to health service providers, the official told IRIN.

The Ministry of Agriculture reported on Thursday (23 June 2011) that there is a 29,000 ton shortfall in the annual maize requirement - the country’s staple food - of about 114,000 tons, which will be filled by imports, but did not say how this will be financed.

Most of the cancer patients in South Africa were recipients of a special fund for the poor - in the absence of a national health system - but Health Minister Benedict Xaba told parliament recently the fund was exhausted.

## **Cuts to Hit Primary Education**

*27 June 2011*

The Swaziland Government lied when it said there would be no financial cuts in education as a result of the economic crisis ripping the kingdom.

Now it is revealed that money is so tight, pupils might be forced to take lessons under trees.

Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, said in November 2010<sup>66</sup> and has repeated since that health and education would not be affected by government-imposed spending cuts. But, now it is revealed that the project to expand free primary education for all children is in jeopardy – because the government has run out of money.

As part of capital expenditure cuts the E31 million (US\$4.4 million) needed to build teachers’ houses and classrooms is not there.

About 560 Primary schools across Swaziland need new classrooms to accommodate the pupils enrolling for the free education programme.

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=93067>

<sup>66</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/11/false-promises-on-spending-cuts.html>

Pat Muir, Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Education, revealed this last week. He told a primary school thanksgiving ceremony that parents deserved to be told the truth about what was going on.

The *Swazi Observer* newspaper reported him saying this should be done to avoid panic next year - when some pupils might be forced to take lessons under trees.

### **Social Unrest if Salaries Cut**

*29 June 2011*

Public servants in Swaziland have said they will take to the streets and cause 'social instability' if government forces pay cuts on them.

Vincent Dlamini, Secretary-General of the National Public Service and Allied Workers Unions (NAPSAWU), was reacting to a statement from Majozi Sithole, Swazi Finance Minister, that the government had run out of cash and unless it got a loan from somewhere it would not be able to pay salaries in July (2011). At best, he said government might be able to pay only half wages.

Dlamini said this news would not sit well with civil servants and would force them to take to the streets if they would earn half of their salaries or if there are any forced cuts.

The *Times of Swaziland* reported Dlamini saying, 'Our position is clear that we do not want the pay cuts because we believe that we are not to blame for the current situation. Government must not threaten the civil servants because these pay cuts especially on low earners will lead them to take to the streets.'

'I have spoken to many of our members and they are fully opposed to the pay cuts because they have many commitments. They must not dare touch those salaries,' he said.

### **No Pay, So Nurses Strike**

*6 July 2011*

Nurses in Swaziland started an indefinite strike yesterday (5 July 2011) because the Swazi Government has not paid them their June salaries.

The nurses at Good Shepherd Hospital, Siteki, took to the streets in protest.

This followed a three-hour meeting with hospital bosses who could not guarantee they would be paid.

Last week the nurses suspended a two day sit-in after Benedict Xaba, the Swazi Minister of Health, promised to deal with the problem.

Mduduzi Shongwe, the workers committee chairman, said they would not stop the protest until they get their money.

'We suspended the strike last week after the administration called us to the table. We had the hope that today's meeting was going to produce a solution, but that did not happen,' the *Times of Swaziland* reported him saying.

Xaba had earlier explained that government was currently faced with a cash flow problem, the newspaper reported.

About 400 workers are affected by the non-payment.

### **Pro-democracy Movement Setting the Agenda**

*8 July 2011*

Swaziland's prodemocracy movement seems to be in control of the media agenda in its campaign to ensure that no loan is made to bailout King Mswati III's regime without conditions for political reform attached.

A group of activists representing trade unions, banned political parties and civic organisations was in Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday (7 July 2011) to lobby about the loan and to talk to international media.

The Swazi Government, handpicked by King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, has asked South Africa for a loan. Some reports say it is for R10 billion (US\$1.5 billion), but others put the figure at R1.2 billion.

The South African Government has confirmed that it is considering a loan request from Swaziland, but has not confirmed a figure.

Prodemocracy activists, including representatives of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCCO) briefed the media yesterday and their message has been reported to all corners of the globe, mainly through the Associated Press, Reuter and AFP news agencies.

Media organisations in South Africa have also carried reports from the briefing.

All of them repeated the message of the prodemocracy activists that Swaziland is an undemocratic kingdom with serious human and civil rights issues. They say that no loan should be given without conditions for political reform.<sup>67</sup>

The media have also been reminding their readers that King Mswati is the last absolute monarch in sub-Saharan Africa and that he has a long history of using his subjects' money to finance his own lavish lifestyle. He has 13 palaces in a kingdom with a population of 1.2 million and a vast personal fortune.

In none of the media reports has any case been made in favour of King Mswati and the status quo. To the international media it is a given that the message from the prodemocracy camp is true and change must come.

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<sup>67</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/king-will-never-give-up-power.html>

This is in contrast to the media in Swaziland. All broadcast news is state censored and no criticism of King Mswati is permitted. The newspapers are not officially censored, but one (the *Swazi Observer*) is on record saying it would never criticise the king (unsurprising, since it is in effect owned by him).

The only other daily newspaper (the *Times of Swaziland*) is independent of government and the monarchy, but it censors itself when reporting about King Mswati and would never repeat the kind of criticism that is appearing in the international media.

There is a new twist in the reporting this week and that is the willingness of Swazi prodemocracy leaders to go on the record when criticising the King.

One of the most outspoken has been Musa Hlophe, the coordinator of SCCCO, who may find himself in trouble for some of his comments.

Hlophe, who lives and works in Swaziland and has a regular column in the *Times Sunday* newspaper, was reported making stern criticisms of the King.

It is not fanciful to suspect he will be the subject of at least harassment and possibly worse from the Swazi regime when he returns to Manzini. Only last week High Court Judge Thomas Masuku was suspended from office after he made reference to King Mswati and a 'forked tongue' in one of his judgments. He has been accused of 'insulting' the king.

Hlophe may face the same accusation for reportedly calling the king 'a dictator'.

Reuter reported him saying that the king was unlikely to agree to political reform.<sup>68</sup>

'The King is likely to say no. That is in the nature of all dictators', Reuter reported him saying.

It went on quoting him, 'But as people increasingly become desperate and in despair, there will be those who say "Enough is enough", and drag him out of the palace screaming and kicking.'

*Business Day*,<sup>69</sup> a South African newspaper, quoted Hlophe saying it was a 'fallacy' that most Swazis were in favour of the King. Swazis had 'lived a lie that has confused people', leading them to believe they were super-custodians of African traditions.

'We have actually camouflaged our dictatorship in that kind of blanket,' *Business Day* reported him saying.

The *Mail and Guardian*<sup>70</sup> newspaper in South Africa also reports Hlophe saying offering a financial bailout to Swaziland 'is like giving money to a drunken wife-beater'.

Hlophe urged South Africans who had been helped by the Swazi people during the days of apartheid to use this opportunity to bring regime change to his country.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.news24.com/Africa/SA-urged-not-to-bail-out-Mswati-20110707-2#>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=147924>

<sup>70</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-07-like-giving-money-to-a-drunken-wifebeater>

These sentiments will not be welcomed by the Swazi regime and it is likely that it will retaliate against Hlophe in some way.

But he has one thing in his favour: the international media will be watching closely . . .

### **State Radio Censors Talk on Economy**

*11 July 2011*

The plug was pulled on a state radio phone-in in Swaziland when listeners started criticising the government for its handling of the economy.

Percy Simelane, the boss of Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services (SBIS), personally stormed the radio studio and cut the programme.

SBIS is state-controlled and news and current affairs broadcasts are heavily censored. Simelane said the programme did not have permission to discuss the topic.

This is what happened, according to a report in the *Swazi Observer*.<sup>71</sup> Veteran announcer Veli Simelane ‘invited listeners to call and share their views on whether South Africa should give Swaziland a loan and generally their take on the economic crisis in the country’.

‘Veli shelved a scheduled programme for the call-in. He was meant to host Happy Birthdays phone-in programme. He pleaded with listeners to ignore birthday wishes but share their views on the loan application.

‘Indeed, listeners jumped at the opportunity. A number of callers slammed government for reckless spending and felt South Africa should not extend the loan to Swaziland until certain issues were addressed in the country,’ the *Observer* reported.

The *Observer* censored itself in its report and refused to tell readers details of what listeners had said. ‘Some of the things that were said by the callers cannot be repeated because of their sensitivity,’ it said.

What the newspaper did not report is that late last week it was revealed that South Africa would grant South Africa a R1.2 billion loan, but on condition that it met stringent financial conditions and that King Mswati ceased to be an absolute monarch and moved towards political reform.

It is not known if these points were raised on the radio show. It is unlikely since, although the report that was originally published in the *Southern Africa Report* journal,<sup>72</sup> and later went global on the Internet, it was not mentioned in the Swazi media.

A source told the *Observer* that Simelane was ‘livid’ that the programme went ahead without permission.

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=27197>

<sup>72</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/south-africa-ready-to-give-loan.html>

‘What made the situation critical were the things that some of the callers said on air,’ the source said.

Simelane confirmed to the *Observer* that he had stopped the programme.

‘In newspapers you have editors who check the stories before they are published. The same applies on radio. Part of my duties is to ensure that all that is aired goes through a vetting process. I was merely editing a programme that got to be hosted without following procedure,’ the *Observer* reported him saying.

### **Principals to Shut Schools if Pay Cut**

*13 July 2011*

Principals in Swaziland say they will close down schools immediately if the Swazi Government cuts their pay.

Government is expected to announce tomorrow (14 July 2011) that the pay of all public servants will be cut by 10 per cent, because the kingdom is broke.

Charles Bennett, Chairperson of the Swaziland Principals Association (SWAPA), said if their salaries were touched then their next action would be to close down the schools.

School teachers have already announced that they will strike immediately if their salaries are cut.<sup>73</sup>

Also, the Swaziland national Association of Teachers has called a three-day strike starting 27 July 2011.

Bennett said SWAPA members would not take part in that strike, because ‘as schools administrators, we should always be at school’, the *Times of Swaziland* reported him saying.

The principals have also said they might have to close schools because the Swazi Government has not paid fees for the free primary education scheme or for orphan and vulnerable children.

‘Due to the lack of fees, schools have failed to pay their suppliers, feeding schemes, support staff’s salaries and utilities,’ Bennett said.

### **Pay Cuts Will Cause ‘Swazi Uprising’**

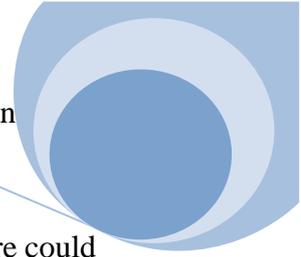
*14 July 2011*

Jan Sithole, the former Secretary-General of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, says there could be an uprising if public service salaries are cut.

Swaziland is broke and the Swazi Government wants to cut salaries by 10 percent, even though the trade unions are against this.

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<sup>73</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/swazi-teachers-to-strike-if-pay-cut.html>



Sithole, speaking at a conference organised by the Centre for Human Rights, said there could be an uprising and civil strife.

‘An uprising is not planned by people but the situation presents itself. If civil servants including the police and the army are not paid, then there could be an uprising,’ the *Times of Swaziland* reported him saying.

Meanwhile, the same newspaper reports Fanisile Mabila, Acting Accountant General, saying public service salaries will be paid as usual this month (July 2011).

School principals and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers have already stated they will close schools immediately the government announces pay cuts.

### **Swazi Finance Minister Lies to BBC**

*23 July 2011*

Swaziland’s Finance Minister Majosi Sithole lied to the BBC when he said he didn’t know how much of the Swazi national budget went to King Mswati III.

The amount was included in the budget Sithole delivered in February 2011.

What Sithole didn’t want the BBC – and the world – to know is that King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, got a 23 percent increase in his budget this year, when just about all government departments were forced to take a 20 percent cut to help Swaziland out of the economic mess successive governments, handpicked by King Mswati, have created.

Although the information has been published all over the world, the Swazi state-controlled broadcast media and the largely self-censoring ‘independent’ newspapers have never given this news to the Swazi people.

This year the king and his family will get E210 million (US\$30 million). That’s E40 million MORE than he got in 2010/2011, when he got E170 million. And it’s E80 million MORE than the E129.5 million he got in 2009/2010.

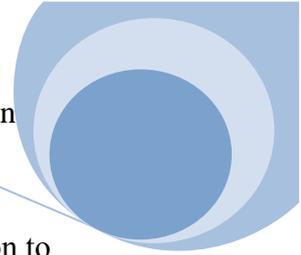
Sithole also lied to the BBC when he said that he didn’t know whether King Mswati and an ‘entourage’ stayed at a first-class hotel when he went to London in April for the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton.

The King’s extravagance was reported all over the world<sup>74</sup> (but again, not in Swaziland). He even had to move from one top-flight hotel to escape demonstrators who picketed outside.

Sithole was being interviewed by the BBC World Service about Swaziland’s attempts to get a loan from South Africa to bail it out of its present economic crisis. So far, Swaziland has failed to get support from the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank for its economic policies.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/hotel-protest-alert-for-swazi-king.html>



Sithole got away with his lies to the BBC – the interviewer didn't have the information to contradict him – and I wonder how many lies he has been telling the South African government about the strength of the Swazi economy.

### **King's Advisor Calls for State of Emergency**

*24 July 2011*

Prince Logcogco, the chair of King Mswati's advisory council Liqoqo, is pressing for a state of emergency to be declared in the kingdom to tackle the economic crisis.

If the state of emergency is declared the government will be able to impose wage cuts on public servants without consultation with trade unions.

The Swazi Government would also be able to enforce other measures as it saw fit (depending upon the actual wording of the emergency declaration).

Logcogco told the *Times Sunday*<sup>75</sup> there was too much delay in tackling the economic crisis, caused by 'endless negotiations'.

In a state of emergency, the newspaper reported him saying, 'government was going to enforce things that have been proven to be ideal for economic transformation'. The newspaper did not give details of what these measures might be.

The *Times Sunday*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, is claiming today (24 July 2011) that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) advised the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, to declare a state of emergency.

The newspaper quotes an unnamed source saying, 'We are aware that the IMF advised us to declare a state of emergency but we haven't done anything about that, and the country is really drowning.'

The source goes on, 'If we declare the crisis as disaster, it means we are raising a global alarm that the country is on a brink of collapse. In fact, we are sending an SOS (sihlaba inyandzaleyo) as a nation. As it is, some countries believe that we are up to a trick to rob them. We have to bear in mind that countries in Europe don't trust us, they actually don't trust our system of governance.'

The *Times Sunday* reports Logcogco saying, 'IMF went on to advise us as a country to declare a state of emergency on the economic problems.'

It adds, 'He had personally expected government to have, at least, done something about the IMF's advice.'

The newspaper does not publish confirmation from the IMF that it advised on a state of emergency. It also says, 'Macanjana Motsa, Government Press Secretary, said nothing was

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/30826.html>

communicated to government about declaring a state of emergency on the economic problems.’

So all we have is an unnamed source and the chair of Liqoqo saying a state of emergency is necessary.

It looks like Swaziland’s ruling elite are trying to impose a state of emergency, which will withdraw yet more of the Swazi people’s rights, and blame it on a foreign organisation – the IMF.

### **King’s Man Threat to Constitution**

*25 July 2011*

The call by King Mswati III’s top man for a state of emergency to be called in Swaziland to beat the economic crisis is unconstitutional.

Prince Logcogco, the chair of King Mswati’s advisory council Liqoqo, wants the state of emergency so that the Swazi government can impose wage cuts and other measures without consultation.

As I reported yesterday, (24 July 2011) he told the *Times Sunday* there was too much delay in tackling the economic crisis, caused by ‘endless negotiations’.

In a state of emergency, the newspaper reported him saying, ‘government was going to enforce things that have been proven to be ideal for economic transformation’. The newspaper did not give details of what these measures might be.

Logcogco might want to take this drastic action, but to succeed he would have to tear up the Swazi Constitution.<sup>76</sup>

Section 36 (2) clearly states a state of emergency would not be lawful unless

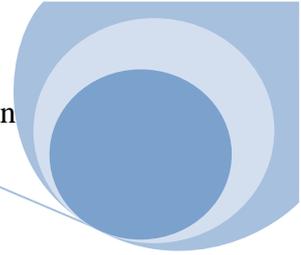
- (a) Swaziland is at war or circumstances have arisen making imminent a state of war between Swaziland and a foreign State;
- (b) there is in Swaziland a natural disaster or imminent threat of a natural disaster; or
- (c) there is action taken or immediately threatened by a person or body of persons of such a nature or on so extensive a scale as to be likely to endanger the public safety or to deprive the community or a significant part of that community of supplies or services essential to the life of the community.

What Prince Logcogco really wants is power for himself and King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, to deal with the crisis in any way they see fit. Which, of course, means in ways that ensure the monarchy and the Swazi elites do not have to give up their power and privileges.

It also shows us how committed Logcogco is to the constitution that he is willing to tear it up at the first opportunity.

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/26185252/Swaziland-Constitution>



## **Swaziland's Wealth Stays With the King**

*2 August 2011*

Wealth held in trust for the Swazi nation by King Mswati III will not be used to help bail out the ailing Swaziland economy.

Profits made by two royal entities Tibiyo TakaNgwane and Tisuka TakaNgwane are controlled by the monarchy and in theory at least are meant to be used to support the nation.

However, in reality, King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, uses the money for his own personal use. He is known to lead an extravagant lifestyle and has at least 13 palaces in the tiny kingdom where 70 percent of the 1.1 million people live on less than US\$1 per day.

The Swaziland Government has confirmed that money from the royal entities will not be used to support the economy.

In a letter to labour unions, Majazi Sithole, Swazi Finance Minister, confirmed the money belonged to Royalty and not to the people. In his letter he said, 'these entities were formed in terms of a Royal Charter which does not provide for their income to be part of government income'.

Tibiyo and Tisuka are investment funds with extensive shares in a number of businesses, industries, property developments and tourism facilities in Swaziland. They do not pay tax in the way that ordinary businesses in the kingdom do.

Sithole was responding to a petition delivered by trade unions calling for change.

## **Details of how 7,000 Jobs Will Go**

*12 August 2011*

About 3,500 public servants in Swaziland will lose their jobs completely because of the government's financial crisis.

Another 2,500 people will no longer be public servants as their jobs will be privatised. And, another 1,000 jobs will remain, but they will be in organisations such the Swaziland Revenue Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority which will become 'semi-autonomous' from government and not therefore on its payroll.

The figures were published by the *Times of Swaziland*, the only independent daily newspaper in the kingdom, today (12 August 2011).<sup>77</sup>

The newspaper reports that the majority of the privatised jobs will be low grade cleaners and security guards.

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<sup>77</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/31461.html>

The 7,000 job losses are to meet the requirements of the Swazi Government's Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR), which it drew up in response to the International Monetary Fund's demands that public sector wages in Swaziland be cut.

The *Times*' report comes from the Manzini region Smart Partnership Dialogue presentation on the FAR.

It reports that Budget Director Bheki Bhembe gave the figures.

The *Times* also reported Bhembe saying the Swazi Government owed E1.2 billion to creditors in the kingdom for work done.

'The IMF wants us to expedite payment of these debts because the economy is generated by the circulation of money. If the private sector does not have this money with them, then the economy will reach crisis point,' he said.

### **Stop King Mswati Wasting Loan Money**

*25 August 2011*

The Swaziland Government has revealed that E1 billion of the E2.4 billion loan it will get from South Africa will be used on 'capital projects' – but it hasn't said which ones.

This is worrying because King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, has in the past forced his hand-picked governments to waste millions on his own, still uncompleted, vanity projects.

Top of the list is the Sikhuphe International Airport that remains only partially built in a Swazi wasteland, a very long way from any town or city. One informed estimated published by the *Weekend Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati himself, said the total cost of the airport could top US\$1 billion before it is finished – if it ever is.

The most recent date for completion<sup>78</sup> – the end of July 2011 – passed without fanfare and with Sikhuphe nowhere near finished.

The King has a second vanity project that he has demanded be built – the Royal Science and Technology Park – that is estimated to cost E850 million (US\$120 million) for the first phase alone. This 'park' is supposed to consist of a bio-technological park and an information technology park at Nokwane.

No one bothered to make a needs-assessment for the park (or the airport for that matter), but when the plan was launched in November 2010, project manager Moses Zungu said world class researchers would want to come to work at the site. He even said that the kingdom's only university, the University of Swaziland (UNISWA), would play a key role in providing expertise at the park.

That's the same UNISWA that hasn't been able to open for business this academic year because there is no money.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/06/rash-promise-to-finish-sikhuphe.html>

According to Swazi Finance Minister Majozi Sithole this week, E1 billion of an E2.4 billion loan from South Africa will be spent on ‘capital projects’ – twice the amount to be used on social projects, such as health, education and grants for the elderly.

King Mswati and his governments have a long record of wasting public money on unnecessary projects and spending. Before South Africa hands over the money, we should all be told clearly how it is to be spent. None of it must be used on the King’s vanity projects. They are unnecessary and a complete waste of money.

### **Cuts: Death Sentence for 65,000**

*26 August 2011*

About 65,000 people in Swaziland could die because the government is not paying for HIV drugs, the Swazi Senate has been told.

But the government says it can’t afford to buy the life-saving ARV drugs they need.

The government, handpicked by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, has led the kingdom into a financial meltdown and is only able to survive the next few months courtesy of a loan from South Africa. Spending on most non-Royal budgets across Swaziland have been slashed to the bone.

Senator Thuli Msane revealed yesterday (25 August 2011) that the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) estimated 65,000 people could die because of the ARV shortage.

She accused the government of misleading people into believing that sufficient ARVs were available.

She told the senate that NERCHA had told participants in a workshop that doctors were no longer starting patients on the first line of treatment, but instead just gave them whatever was available, the *Swazi Observer* newspaper reported.<sup>80</sup>

She said this was dangerous to the health of the patients because they would end up being resistant to the drugs.

NERCHA also revealed that the rate of HIV infection in the kingdom was increasing, the newspaper reported.

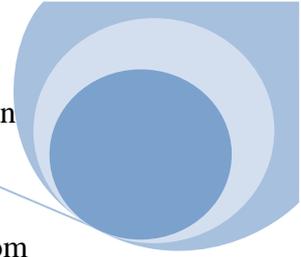
Msane highlighted allegations of patients being given expired treatment. ‘It is very worrying when we get such information from people we entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the illness is being monitored. What is government doing about this?’ she asked.

‘Let us make health a priority and make sure our people live longer to avoid the increase in the number of orphaned children, which multiplies the load on government. Let us stop lying and say things are going well when that is not true,’ she added.

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<sup>79</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/08/money-cut-so-uniswa-stays-closed.html>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=29079>



The *Observer* reported Bennedict Xaba, the Swazi Health Minister, saying the kingdom needed E42 million (US\$5.8 million) to buy a full stock of HIV drugs, but it could only afford to spend E11 million.

### **King Falsely Accuses IMF** *15 September 2011*

King Mswati III, the absolute monarch of Swaziland, has falsely accused the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of treating his kingdom more harshly than other nations over its financial meltdown.

He told a meeting of the Smart Partnership National Dialogue in Swaziland yesterday (14 September 2011) that the IMF wanted to help Swaziland with a bailout but it wanted it to meet financial conditions first before it would offer its support.

The King – recently criticised in a cable from the US Embassy in Swaziland as ‘not intellectually well developed’<sup>81</sup> – showed his deep ignorance of recent history when he told the meeting that his kingdom was being treated differently from countries such as Greece, Portugal and Ireland, which also needed bailouts.

‘However, when they come here you see that they treat us in a different spirit. We are told that before we get a bailout we should implement pay cuts and also retrench government employees,’ the *Times of Swaziland*<sup>82</sup> quotes the king saying.

But the truth is that these countries were required to cut public expenditure, slash the pay of public employees, and retrench civil servants. So, in fact, Swaziland is being treated in exactly the same way as these other countries.

The King also tried to deflect criticism away from the government he handpicked by claiming that the IMF was forcing it to cut public sector jobs. He also claimed that the IMF was forcing his government to retrench workers without consultation.

The fact is that the IMF has ordered none of these things to be done. King Mswati’s Government, headed by Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini, came up with what it grandly called a Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR) to save the economy. The Swazi Government had complete control over the contents of this. It knew it had to get its financial house in order and chose to attack public spending and target public sector workers’ pay and jobs rather than, for example, cut the enormous allowances government ministers and MPs pay themselves from the public purse.

The government chose not to engage in meaningful dialogue with the workers. The labour unions are eager for talks.

The Associated Press quoted the King blaming the IMF for the delay in Swaziland implementing any financial changes.

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<sup>81</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/09/us-says-swazi-king-imbalanced.html>

<sup>82</sup> <http://times.co.sz/News/32484.html>

‘It is lies that we refuse to embrace IMF programs.’ the AP quoted the King saying. ‘What we want is that the IMF hear our side of the story as a country. Something which it refuses to do.’

In fact, the IMF regularly visits Swaziland to do exactly that. Its last visit was last month<sup>83</sup> (August 2011), when it met with the King and senior government ministers and asked how far they had got in implementing their own FAR. The answer was not far, so the IMF said it could not offer its support to Swaziland for a loan from the African Development Bank.

The fault for Swaziland’s financial crisis lies with King Mswati and the succession of governments he handpicked. To blame the IMF is a smokescreen.

### **Swazi King Shows Ignorance – Again**

*16 September 2011*

King Mswati III, who the US embassy in Swaziland recently said was ‘not a reader’ and ‘not intellectually well developed’, has once again shown his ignorance of the world.

For the second day running he has misled his subjects in speeches he has made to them about the state of his kingdom.

Yesterday (15 September 2011), King Mswati hit out at the Swazi news media for reporting negatively about the R2.4 billion loan his government begged from neighbouring South Africa.

He told the media in a meeting at the Smart Partnership Dialogue that they should shut up being negative about the loan and should support him.

‘Why do you focus on the bad things if you want to be taken seriously and genuinely? We have the E2.4 billion loan where you were not present when it was being negotiated but you are now writing badly about it. People who are like that are not to be taken seriously. I had hoped we had come here to come up with solutions to the problems we are facing,’ the *Times of Swaziland*<sup>84</sup> quoted the king saying.

The *Times* continued, ‘His Majesty said the media has to be professional in its operations by working together with the leadership instead of always looking for the bad that government does.

“European countries also have a similar situation like ours but the media there is supportive of their countries. You then wish the media in Swaziland would understand the seriousness of the situation instead of treating it as child’s play,” the King said.’

And that’s where he shows his ignorance, because in fact the European media have been fiercely attacking governments for their mismanagement of their economies which has resulted in huge public expenditure cuts, job losses and salary reductions.

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<sup>83</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/08/swaziland-fails-its-imf-targets.html>

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/32514.html>

Yesterday, I reported King Mswati showed his profound ignorance of European politics when he told a different meeting at the Smart Partnership that European nations such as Ireland and Greece had not had to implement pay cuts in order to get financial bailouts. The truth was the exact opposite of what King Mswati believed.

### **Is Egyptian Loan Offer a Scam?**

*18 October 2011*

A cloud of mystery surrounds a group of Egyptian financiers who arrived in Swaziland today (18 October 2011) claiming they can offer King Mswati III a loan of E2.4billion (\$US300 million), at no interest and no strings attached, to bail out his kingdom. And the money will be available within a week.

The *Swazi Observer*<sup>85</sup> reports today that the financiers are from a company called FIDICO (Finance, Innovation, Development Investment Company). Representatives of the company have arrived in Swaziland to meet with the King. Once they have convinced him that the deal can be done, the money will flow.

It sounds too good to be true – because it probably is.

The mystery is that when you search for FIDICO or the Finance, Innovation, Development Investment Company on the Internet you can't find it. Nor, can you find the principal characters in the deal named today by the *Observer*.

The *Observer* reports that FIDICO was expected to sign a 'development agreement with the new government of Comores on Thursday and was urgently expected in Northern and Southern Sudan for the same purposes'.

The *Observer* adds, 'FIDICO, according to the company flyer, has created financial engineering concepts and mechanisms, which they successfully used for large-scale development projects in several African countries, at no cost to their governments, and without the need for loans of any kind, nor the incurring of any debt. FIDICO has refined, from experience, the new ecological or natural resource paradigm, as absolutely essential to future sustainable development.'

The newspaper goes on to report that FIDICO says it secured \$US280 million funding for agricultural development in Namibia at no cost to the government.

It also tell readers about the African Dream, which it says has been created by the financier behind FIDICO, 'based on his knowledge gained from years of experience initiating and carrying development projects in association with the people, including the innovators and leaders of Africa'.

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<sup>85</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=31132>

And yet all this fine work seems to have gone unreported. Nowhere on the Internet have I been able to find any information that substantiates any of the claims the *Observer* makes on behalf of FIDICO today.

The representatives from FIDICO are in Swaziland today; I suggest a reporter from the *Observer* nips round smartly to ask them some pertinent questions.

Otherwise we might be forced to conclude that a bunch of con merchants are trying to take King Mswati for an idiot.

### **Finance Minister Lies About Pay Cuts**

*11 November 2011*

Majozi Sithole, the Swaziland Finance Minister, and the *Swazi Observer*<sup>86</sup> newspaper are misleading the people over the financial crisis that is gripping the kingdom.

Sithole claims that public servants must have their salaries slashed by 10 percent ‘across the board’ so Swaziland can get a E2.4 billion (US\$307 million) loan from South Africa.

He claimed, and the *Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, uncritically reported him, that the stumbling block in receiving the loan was the lack of wage cuts.

Sithole was tabling a supplementary budget in parliament that called for further cuts in public spending. He said the cuts were needed so that Swaziland could access ‘external funding’. The *Observer* reported him saying that ‘failure to adhere to these dictates meant missing out on a proposed E2.4 billion loan from South Africa’.

And that’s where he misled Parliament. It is true that South Africa has offered the Swazi Government a E2.4 billion loan, on condition that it starts to get its financial house in order. But, the real reason why the loan, which was made available in August this year (2011), hasn’t been handed over is that South Africa also included conditions that Swaziland should move towards becoming a democratic state.<sup>87</sup>

It is the ‘democracy clause’ that King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, doesn’t like. He has no intention of giving up his powers, no matter how much his subjects may suffer as a result. And that is why the money has not been forthcoming.

The *Observer* did not tell this to its readers, but did say that the South African loan, secured ‘with the efforts of His Majesty King Mswati III’, had been delayed ‘pending certain logistics’.

Sithole is trying to deflect the real reason for the financial crisis away from the incompetence of the government, handpicked by King Mswati, and of which he is a member. He wants the Swazi people to believe it is the public servants’ refusal to take wage cuts that is holding up the loan.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=32045>

<sup>87</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/08/s-africa-sets-out-loan-conditions.html>

He also said that without the loan the government is running out of cash and may not be able to pay public service salaries this month, a less than veiled threat that if the public servants don't do as they are told and take a pay cut they won't get any pay at all.

### **Government Panics as News of Pay Delays Leaks**

*12 November 2011*

The Swaziland Government is panicking after an internal memo saying that salaries of public servants could not be paid this month and would be delayed by about two weeks was leaked yesterday (11 November 2011).

The memo, sent to the secretary to cabinet, all principal secretaries and all heads of department, got into the hands of prodemocracy activists and within hours the international news agencies AFP and Reuters had published the news.

Then the Swazi Government at first refused to confirm the memo existed and then hastily convened a late-night press conference to say the memo had been published in haste and the Cabinet would discuss the matter on Monday.

The memo signed by Fikisiwe Mabila, the Acting Accountant General, said that salaries that should be paid on 20 November 2011 would be paid on various dates from 5 – 8 December.

The memo gave no reasoning for the delay, but it comes days after Majenzi Sithole, the Swaziland Finance Minister, admitted that there was not enough money to government salaries this month.<sup>88</sup> About E350 million is needed to pay the salaries.

This is as a result of the meltdown in the Swazi economy caused by years of financial mismanagement by successive governments handpicked by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

Once news of the memo became public yesterday, Percy Simelane, the government spokesperson, refused to confirm its existence. The *Weekend Observer* reports that he said he had not seen the memo, but had heard about it on the 'grapevine'.

Then Sithole called an impromptu press conference last night withdrawing the memo, saying it had been issued in haste and that the cabinet would meet on Monday.

The fact that state-controlled radio SBIS had by then run with the story on its 6pm news bulletin suggests that the memo did have the official backing of government. The station is not known for its independent journalistic endeavour and it is inconceivable that it would have made the report without official approval.

The swift U-turn by the government came after angry reaction from union leaders. Vincent Dlamini, secretary general of the National Public Service Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU), told the AFP news agency, 'In light of the developments, we call upon the

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<sup>88</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/11/govt-cant-pay-november-salaries.html>

workers of Swaziland to rise up and change their conditions. There shall be no messiah but only their power shall set them free.’

In a statement published in the *Observer* today<sup>89</sup> (12 November 2011) NAPSAWU said there was no doubt that the news would lead to civil disobedience in Swaziland.

‘We do not expect government to have done that because there had been no consultations prior to the memo, this is an imposition. But since the beginning of the year our members have been on the streets, it is easy to predict the same would happen this time around.’

The *Swazi News* reports today, ‘Some people believe that government is using this as a litmus paper to provoke their reaction so that it gets a picture of how public servants would react once the proposed pay cuts are eventually implemented. Others think this is a strategy to deliberately rob the employees of one month’s salary as the trend of shifting pay dates progresses.’

### **Swazi King ‘to Climb Down on Bailout Loan’**

*15 November 2011*

The Swaziland Government is close to accepting that the kingdom must move towards democracy to get a bailout loan from South Africa.

Majozi Sithole, Swaziland’s Finance Minister, as good as admitted this in parliament yesterday (14 November 2011).

South Africa had offered Swaziland a R2.4 billion bailout loan, but with conditions attached. One of the conditions was a move towards reform on democracy and human rights.

King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, put the block on that and the deal stalled. If it had gone ahead money from South Africa would have arrived in Swaziland in August 2011.

But now, three months later, Swaziland cannot pay the E350 million public service salaries this month. And all other avenues for bailout funds seem to have failed. So, the Swazi king has no choice.

Sithole told parliament that Mtiti Fakudze, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, would sign the deal with his counterpart in South Africa soon.

If Sithole is telling the truth – and it is a big ‘if’ as he has consistently lied to the Swazi people and the international community about the scale of Swaziland’s financial meltdown – this will be a major climb-down by King Mswati.

According to the *Swazi Observer*,<sup>90</sup> the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, today (15 November 2011), Sithole said Swaziland had no choice but to accept the loan conditions.

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=32148>

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=32246>

‘At the moment nothing has been signed but the ministers of both countries are in the process of signing the agreement,’ he said.

A source close to government told the *Observer*, Fakudze was making means to get the minister in South Africa so that the agreement would be signed as soon as possible.

‘The only problem now is that the Minister of Foreign Affairs in South Africa is currently out of that country,’ the source said.

The source revealed that there were some conditions that government removed before when it had to sign for the loan.

‘When South Africa realised that some conditions had been removed talks were stalled because Swaziland had to sign with the original conditions,’ said the source.

The source said it later dawned on government that since it was the beggar it could not choose.

### **Secrecy Surrounds New Swazi Loan**

*16 November 2011*

Percy Simelane, the Swaziland Government spokesperson, denied that parastatals, such as the Swaziland Electricity Company, were approached for money to pay this month’s public servants’ salaries.

And he has also denied that government has had to pay ‘exorbitant’ interest rates on loans it has secured from domestic banks, financial institutions and private companies in Swaziland.

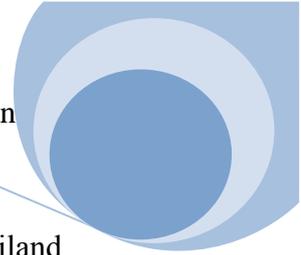
He told the BBC that ‘it will be easy’ for Swaziland to repay the loans it secured yesterday (15 November 2011).

Simelane was speaking to the BBC World Service after he announced that public servants would be paid on time this month (November 2011) and that a memo from Fikisiwe Mabila, the Acting Accountant General, announcing that payments would be delayed has been withdrawn.

But, despite close questioning from the BBC, Simelane refused to say how much interest the government would have to pay on the loans, claiming it was a matter ‘between the borrower and the government that sought the money’.

He also flatly denied that the Swazi Government had taken any money from parastatals in the kingdom. He said there was ‘no truth’ in the claim that the government had approached parastatals.

He also said that Swaziland had secured a loan from South Africa (for R2.4 billion) and this money was coming to the kingdom. ‘It isn’t that we weren’t given the loan ... the loan was given to Swaziland, the only thing that is remaining now is finding the right papers so that the loan could be accessed by Swaziland.’



He didn't say that the major stumbling block was South Africa's insistence that Swaziland move towards democracy before the money is released.

Yesterday, it was reported that Majozi Sithole, the Swaziland Finance Minister, had conceded that Swaziland would accept the condition so it could get the loan.

### **Swaziland at Standstill: Finance Minister**

*16 November 2011*

The Swaziland Government admitted yesterday (15 November 2011) that it has no money so everything in the kingdom is at a 'standstill'.

Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, told state-controlled radio, SBIS, that civil servants, who learnt yesterday that they would get their salaries this month after the government secured loans from private institutions, would in effect be paid for doing nothing.<sup>91</sup>

The *Times of Swaziland*,<sup>92</sup> the only independent daily newspaper in the kingdom, reports Sithole told radio listeners that 'due to the ongoing financial crisis, government has found itself coming to a standstill as it lacks the necessary apparatus to work'.

It quotes Sithole saying, 'Right now everything is at a standstill. As we collect money to pay salaries all other things are at a standstill. It means they (the civil servants) are not working but they will be paid. They cannot work without the necessary tools.'

He added, 'I do not know what we will do because the government cash flow is not good.'

He added, 'We are living from hand to mouth.'

### **IMF Calls for Sacrifice from Swazi King**

*16 November 2011*

The IMF wants King Mswati III to make a 'sacrifice' in his own spending to help save the economy of Swaziland.

And Joannes Mongardini, leader of the IMF Mission to Swaziland that has just finished a two-week visit to the kingdom, said there was no need for public service wage cuts. The money could be saved from cutting spending on the army, the police and politicians' allowances.

The reality, said Mongardini, was that the old and sick were suffering most from the financial crisis in Swaziland.

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<sup>91</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/11/new-loan-easy-to-repay-claims-govt.html>

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/34659.html>

His comments came as the IMF reported that the economic meltdown in the kingdom had reached a ‘critical’ stage.

Mongardini was speaking on the BBC World Service **Focus on Africa** programme today (16 November 2011). The programme was broadcast live in Swaziland on the state-controlled SBIS radio station. The last time the BBC broadcast material on **Focus on Africa** that was critical of King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, the programme was banned in Swaziland.

Mongardini told the BBC that the most worrying part of the financial crisis was the impact on the most vulnerable members of society – orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and the elderly. He said the Swazi Government owed OVCs US\$10 million.

Asked by the BBC whether the amount of the Swaziland budget that went to King Mswati should be reduced, Mongardini said, ‘We would expect all Swazis to make a sacrifice.’

Mongardini also said he didn’t believe there needed to be public service wage cuts. He said it would be possible to meet the IMF’s target of 5 percent cuts by reducing the cost of Swaziland’s army, police forces and the ‘very generous’ allowances that were paid to politicians.

He said the loan announced by the Swazi Government yesterday that would guarantee that public servants would be paid this month was not a long-term solution. It didn’t solve the underlying problem in Swaziland which was that the government had the largest public sector wage bill in sub-Saharan Africa.

Earlier, in a media statement<sup>93</sup> the IMF said the fiscal crisis in Swaziland has reached a critical stage. The Swazi Government no longer was collecting enough revenue to cover ‘essential government expenditures, including the wage bill’.

It went on, ‘More importantly, key social programs, like the fight against HIV/AIDS, free primary education, the support for orphaned and vulnerable children, and elderly grants, are being negatively affected.’

It said the Swazi Government had unpaid bills of E1.5 billion (5.3 percent of gross domestic product—GDP).

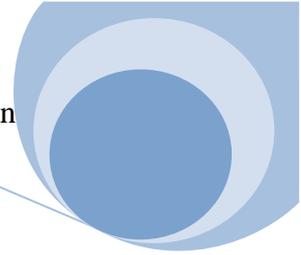
This was reducing private sector activity, with various enterprises dependent on government contracts having to lay off workers or shutting down, the IMF said.

The IMF said Swaziland would ‘continue to face severe liquidity constraints over the coming months’.

It called on the Swaziland Government to protect education, health, and pro-poor spending from further cuts.

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2011/pr11415.htm>



### **Private Loans ‘At Least E1.4 Billion’**

*17 November 2001*

The loans secured this week to pay civil servants salaries amount to at least E1.4 billion. Although, the Swazi Government has been secretive about the deal, including the rate of interest charged, it secured with private banks and financial institutions, Majozi Sithole, the Swazi Finance Minister, claims the loans are enough to meet four months’ salary of public service workers.

The estimated monthly wage bill for civil servants is E350 million, making the total loan worth E1.4 billion.

But, Sithole hasn’t said that the loan will only be used to pay civil servants wages. Earlier this week he said the government had standing obligations of E526 million per month; E350 million of this goes towards the payment of salaries for civil servants, and E120 million goes to parastatals while the remaining E46 million goes to the kingdom’s embassies.<sup>94</sup> This is in addition to other non-salary expenditure of the government.

The money is of course a loan and Sithole hasn’t told us how he expects to repay the money. In effect all he seems to be doing is putting off the day of total financial meltdown by a month or so. Once this loan is spent, Swaziland will be even deeper in debt and still have no way to rescue the economy.

Sithole is still refusing to name the institutions that gave the loans. He told the *Times of Swaziland*<sup>95</sup> newspaper, ‘They asked government not to be revealed, so we will respect that.’

Meanwhile, Sithole is refusing to comment on a report, also in the *Times*,<sup>96</sup> that government is close to securing E1.4 billion from two local financial institutions. A source told the *Times*, the Swazi government secured E1 billion from one of the companies and E400 million from the other.

### **No Need for Wage Cuts, says IMF**

*17 November 2011*

There is no need to retrench civil servants or cut their wages to save the Swaziland economy, a top IMF official said.

Joannes Mongardini, the Head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission to Swaziland, said there were other ways to reduce the bill in Swaziland without cutting the wages of ordinary workers.

This contradicts the Swaziland Government that has demanded cuts in salaries of 10 percent across-the-board for public service workers.

Mongardini told the BBC World Service **Focus on Africa** programme yesterday (16 November 2011), ‘We are recommending for the government to reduce the wages bill by 5

<sup>94</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/11/swaziland-days-away-from-disaster.html>

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/34705.html>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.times.co.sz/News/34704.html>

percent. This is a relatively moderate amount compared to countries like Greece, Portugal and Ireland.'

Asked by the BBC about the position of public service workers who have complained about the possibility of retrenchments and wage cuts, Mongardini said, 'We fully understand that this is a politically difficult decision to make.'

'Having said that, the government can find other ways to reduce the wage bill that will not require salary cuts. In particular, some of the largest increases in the wage bill in recent years are due to increased security forces and police personnel and they also are due to very generous allowances that the government has given to politicians and top civil servants.'

### **Tension as Public Servants Go Unpaid**

*21 December 2011*

There is tension in Swaziland today (21 December 2011) amid fears of unrest as civil servants discovered they have not been paid this month.

Salaries should have been deposited in accounts yesterday, but although pay slips were sent out no funds were transferred to banks.

The Swazi Government is all but broke and had trouble paying salaries last month. Swaziland Finance Minister Majozi Sithole said then that he had secured enough money to pay salaries for four months.

There are now serious doubts that he was telling the truth.

Among those left unpaid are members of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), one of the main critics of the government.

The SNAT Facebook site has been awash with posts from teachers complaining against the government and calling for a mass protest to be held at the Ministry of Finance today, if salaries are not paid immediately.

Yesterday, disjointed reports came out of Swaziland saying that only members of the army, police and prison staff had been paid. It is unclear if this is true: some reports say as with the teachers they received pay slips, but no money.

There were also reports yesterday that road blocks have been set up throughout Swaziland leading to speculation that police were trying to disrupt any potential protests from unpaid civil servants.

Today, both Swaziland's daily newspapers report the Swaziland Government claims that the money is available to pay salaries and that the delay in payment was caused by administrative error.

Media also report that Percy Simelane, the official government spokesperson, and Finance Minister Sithole were unavailable for comment most of yesterday and let their phones ring unanswered.

## 3. January

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### **Swazi Royals Misuse Embassy**

*3 January 2011*

Why does Swaziland have so many embassies and consulates in foreign countries? The kingdom is the smallest on the African continent and is virtually invisible on the international stage. It doesn't do much trade globally and on close inspection it is obvious that it doesn't need to go to the vast expense of keeping embassies overseas.

The answer is King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, and the way he and his Royal Family bleed dry the Swazi people.

A reader of this blog with close connections to the Swazi Royal Family has written to me to tell me about their misuse of Swaziland's embassy in Taiwan.

But it's not only Taiwan: there is also misuse of three Swazi embassies in the Middle East.

'The Swazi embassy in Taiwan is run by none other than Njabuliso Gwebu, sister-in-law of the king (sister of laNgangaza).

'She was promoted from hairdresser to diplomat. She once attempted teaching but was forced to retire in the public interest for a scandal she committed.

'She has turned the office in Taiwan into a family business. Her sister Thandiwe Dlamini is her secretary and Thandiwe's husband Fakudze has joined them at government expense. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid for his ticket to go there.

'He is said to be studying for a Masters degree yet while in Swaziland he was a driver at the Ministry for Housing. How does somebody graduate from driver to Masters?

'This is at the expense of deserving Swazi students who could get scholarships and study there.

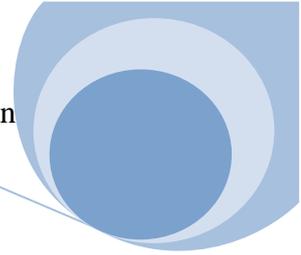
'Thandiwe's son caused a scandal a few years ago when he impregnated the daughter of the ambassador of Malawi in Taiwan, yet Thandiwe was never recalled from the foreign service of Swaziland.

'Njabuliso is also said to be arranging for her husband Dumisani Gwebu to be employed as an investment officer at the same embassy.'

The reader also points out to me that three embassies in the Middle East were opened simply to accommodate the needs of King Mswati's children.

**Qatar** - was opened especially for Princess Tiyandza to go to university in that country.

**Emirates** - was opened for Prince Bandzile to study there. He is tipped to be appointed ambassador there in 2011 after he learns the ropes.



**Kuwait** - was opened for Princess Temaswati to study in that country.

### **Deputy PM Boasts of his Million**

*4 January 2011*

Swaziland's Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku, who is at the centre of corruption probe over land sales,<sup>97</sup> has boasted that he is a millionaire.

Masuku, who believes he should be appointed the next Deputy General Secretary of the United Nations,<sup>98</sup> said he had worked hard to get his money and he was 'clean'.

The boastful Masuku told a group of Christians that he was motivated by his own childhood poverty to become rich.

I'm sure that will be music to the ears of the seven in ten people in Swaziland who live in abject poverty, earning less than one US dollar a day.

And also to the Swazi people he reportedly stole land<sup>99</sup> from in a controversial deal that also involved Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's illegally-appointed Prime Minister,<sup>100</sup> four members of the Swazi Royal Family and at least nine cabinet ministers (past and present).

He may be proud of his wealth, but he has a long way to go to catch up with King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, who has a personal net worth, estimated by Forbes in 2009<sup>101</sup> to be about E1.4 billion (US\$200 million).

Masuku was quick to tell the *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper, that being a millionaire did not mean he had E1 million (about US\$150,000) in cash, as his assets made up most of it.

The *Times* reported, 'Masuku said the millions were in the form of a farm which he bought while still employed in the private sector. The farm is in Malkerns.

"It should be noted that I finished paying it off when I was employed by government," Masuku told the *Times*. He also revealed that he had property at Eveni.

The *Swazi Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, reported, 'he did not elaborate on how he attained the millionaire status save to put emphasis on the fact that he worked above board'.

The *Times* reported, 'He said it was possible to be a millionaire as long as people changed their mindsets towards living.'

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<sup>97</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/swaziland-pm-in-land-sale-scandal.html>

<sup>98</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-deputy-pm-is-delusional.html>

<sup>99</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/pm-stole-from-poor-in-land-scam.html>

<sup>100</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/swazi-king-appoints-illegal-pm.html>

<sup>101</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/07/swaziland-king-keeps-coining-it-in.html>

If wealth were evenly distributed in Swaziland, everyone would be a millionaire,<sup>102</sup> according to resident United Nations (UN) coordinator Musinga Timothy Bandora, who claimed this in October 2008.

What he realised was that Swaziland isn't a poor kingdom when you measure its total wealth: the problem is that the wealth is being siphoned off by a few people – with King Mswati and the Royal Family top of the tree. What's left, and it isn't much, goes to the people.

### **How the King Controls Swaziland**

*5 January 2011*

On Monday (3 January 2011),<sup>103</sup> I reported on how King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, and his Royal Family were abusing their positions in Swazi embassies across the world.

The way the Royal Family dominates what passes for 'public life' in Swaziland is insidious: it invades all parts of the kingdom.

In October 2008, I wrote the following report, which I think is worth digging out the files so that we can be reminded how the king keeps control of 'his' kingdom.

#### **SWAZI KING KEEPS IT IN THE FAMILY<sup>104</sup>**

There's nothing quite like a family business for making sure everyone pulls together.

In Swaziland the business of political repression is run by the Dlamini family with the monarch at the head of the family.

Last week we saw a Dlamini appointed head of government (Prime Minister) by King Mswati. In Swaziland only a Dlamini can be Prime Minister. There's no law that says this and it certainly isn't in the constitution, but that's the way it is. That's the way the ruling family holds on to power.

Last week the king also announced his choices for Senate (he chooses 20 out of the 30 places, MPs choose the other ten. None are elected by the people). Four of his choices are princes or princesses and another five are chiefs.

In Swaziland chiefs do the king's bidding at a local level. People know not to mess with the chief because their livelihood depends on his goodwill. In some parts of Swaziland the chiefs are given the power to decide who gets food that has been donated by international agencies. The chiefs quite literally have power of life and death in such cases and with 65 percent of the population of Swaziland receiving food aid last year that's some power.

The speaker of the House of Assembly is also a prince.

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<sup>102</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/all-swazis-are-millionaires.html>

<sup>103</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-royals-misuse-embassies.html>

<sup>104</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/swazi-king-keeps-it-in-family.html>

There have been new appointments to the Swazi National Council Standing Committee (commonly known as Liqoqo). This is the 'advisory' body to the king and is in effect the committee that decides the traditional law of Swaziland. And in Swaziland traditional law beats the constitution if ever there is a clash. It is also generally accepted (at least by Liqoqo) that it can veto any decision made by the Swazi parliament.

There are three so-called 'royal committees'.

The *Weekend Observer* (18 October 2008) published the names of all three committees and they break down like this.

Liqoqo has 22 members, seven are princes / princesses, six are family Dlamini and three are chiefs.

The 15 members of the Ludzidzini Committee, which advises the Queen Mother, are four princes / princesses, two are Dlamini and four are chiefs.

The third royal committee, the Border Determination Committee, has 12 members, three princes / princesses, three from Dlamini and one chief.

The *Times of Swaziland* today (22 October 2008) reckons that in total at least 20 princes and princesses and 16 chiefs have been appointed to highly influential decision-making positions that they will occupy for the next five years.

We are still waiting for the king to appoint the cabinet.

With public life in Swaziland effectively carved up by the king to ensure that everyone is singing his praises (if you took away these posts from the family members what would they do all day?) is it any wonder that the kingdom is in the dire state it's in today?

### **Military Threat to Anti-corruption Team**

*13 January 2011*

Swaziland's top military officer Lieutenant General Sobantu Dlamini threatened members of the kingdom's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) with violence if they went ahead with a corruption investigation into military personnel.

In a letter to the ACC Commissioner, Michael Mtegha, he wrote that he would not be responsible should soldiers harm ACC officers.

Rightly, the ACC took this as a thinly-veiled threat and Dlamini has been reported to the authorities.

Dlamini wrote the letter to try to stop the ACC investigating five members of the USDF's Air Wing on charges of corruption.

They are said to have repeatedly defrauded government, to the tune of E310 000 (about US\$45,000).

Charges of corruption were made in September 2010 and in the days leading up to them, the ACC had received a lot of pressure not to make the arrests, according to a report in the *Times of Swaziland*.

The *Times* reports an anonymous source, saying, 'You would not believe the names of some of the people who felt that the military should not be put under a microscope as most of their activities border on matters of national security. The message was loud and clear; leave the military alone.'

The source said the military went so far as to claim that the arrests put the very safety of Swaziland at stake. Why? Because with the arrested men out of circulation, no one would know how to fly Swaziland's one-and-only military helicopter.

The source hinted there might be a major corruption scandal in the military that is not yet uncovered. The *Times* reports the source saying there was a concern that if this case against members of the military was allowed to proceed, it would open the door for more cases against soldiers to be investigated.

And the source is almost certainly telling the truth. In an unrelated Army corruption probe, last week, the *Swazi Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, reported that Major General Manyosi Simelane, who ranks third in the Army hierarchy, quit the service on advice from lawyers before he was arrested on a corruption charge. Lawyers said if he was not a serving officer at the time of his arrest he could retain some of his long-term service benefits.

The *Observer* reported that the corruption allegations against Simelane include among others, abusing the name of royalty within the army, army supplies procurement irregularities and taking bribes for army jobs.

The *Swazi News* subsequently reported that Simelane had confessed to a magistrate that he took bribes from people seeking jobs in the Army. The *Swazi News* reported that Simelane might have received as much as E300,000 in bribes, from up to 100 different people.

### **Swaziland: Sponsored by Coca-Cola**

*21 January 2011*

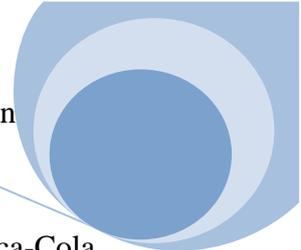
Coca-Cola is to work to promote Swaziland, a kingdom with one of the world's worst human rights records.

Coca-Cola presently contributes about 40 percent of the kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP) through the concentration plant it has in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

This helps to prop up a regime that consistently uses torture against dissidents and alleged criminals. In September 2010, Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's illegally-appointed Prime Minister, said he wanted people (especially foreigners) who criticised him and his government to be tortured using foot whipping.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/09/tourists-face-swazi-state-torture.html>



Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) has said that it will work with Coca-Cola to market the kingdom internationally.

Phiwayinkhosi Ginindza, SIPA Chief Executive, said a country market study done with Coca-Cola was almost complete.

Ginindza told the *Swazi Observer* they had identified Taiwan, the Middle East, and Europe as some possible targets.

Swaziland supplies the Coca-Cola concentrate (the sugary syrup the drink is made from) to most of Africa, big parts of Asia and all of Australia and New Zealand from its industrial plant in Matsapha.

Swaziland has been mortgaged to Coca-Cola, ever since it allowed the company to use it in its fight against workers' interests in other countries. In 2009, Coca-Cola closed its concentrate supply plant in Nigeria, citing an 'unfriendly manufacturing environment' in that country.<sup>106</sup>

It had made 'little profits because of the high manufacturing costs'.

Coca-Cola is said to be so large in Swaziland that it accounts for 40 percent of the kingdom's GDP, but it is said to be exempt from paying full taxes.

Coca-Cola also has an impact on the international standing of Swaziland's economy. The money generated by Coca-Cola is what largely accounts for the kingdom being classified as a 'lower-middle income developing country' (and therefore not eligible for certain types of international aid), even though seven in ten of Swaziland's one-million population live in abject poverty, earning less than one US dollar a day.

This is dominance of the Swaziland economy by Coca-Cola represents a breath-taking piece of economic mismanagement by King Mswati and the governments he appoints. It in effect allows Coca-Cola to determine the economic (and other policies) of the kingdom. Coca-Cola can blackmail Swaziland at any moment it likes. If it doesn't get its way it simply has to threaten to take its business elsewhere and Swaziland's already depressed economy sinks into the mire.

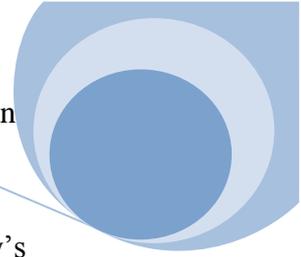
Of course, it could use this power for positive effects. It could demand political reforms in the kingdom that has one of the worst human rights records in the world.<sup>107</sup> It could insist that political parties be unbanned and that the Swaziland Constitution<sup>108</sup> be honoured.

Alas, Coca-Cola won't do any of that: it likes things the way they are. Coca-Cola is in Swaziland in such a big way precisely because it is a dictatorship. This allows wages to be kept low and workers' rights to be oppressed. It also means that Coca-Cola can work directly with King Mswati and the King can ensure that the company gets all it wants. It is no secret that the King keeps a slice of the income from Coca-Cola 'in trust for the nation', which we all know means, 'for himself'.

<sup>106</sup> <http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Money/Business/5461511-146/story.csp>

<sup>107</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/that-was-swazi-year-that-was.html>

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/26185252/Swaziland-Constitution>



King Mswati is said to be so close personally to Coca-Cola that he visits the company's global headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, US, each year.<sup>109</sup>

Ginindza, of SIPA, told the *Observer*, 'We decided to use Coca-Cola as they have shown so much love for the continent [Africa] and they care for it. Over the past 20 years Africa has developed a relationship with them.'

But does Coca-Cola really 'love' Africa? In October 2010, *Bloomberg Business Week* reported that Coca-Cola's sales in the US and other countries had stagnated and it will rely on some of the poorest nations (including in Africa) to generate the 7 to 9 percent earnings growth it has promised investors.

Consumption of Coke is also low in India and China, relative to the US, Europe, and Latin America, but those two continents present less of an opportunity for the company than Africa, where Coke is the dominant brand and a middle class is just emerging.

Tara Lohan at foodchange.org reports that Coca-Cola has been in Africa since 1929, but has not reached total domination yet.

Lohan says, 'The reason for this is that while there are many countries in Africa with growing middle classes, it's also a continent with extreme poverty, scarce or unclean water sources, hunger, political instability, and war. Coke intends to spend \$12 billion in the next ten years there and what do Africans get in return? A product that will use vast amounts of water, create more waste, and offer people no nutritional value.'

Lohan adds, 'Having recently been briefed on Coke's sordid history in Michael Blanding's new book **The Coke Machine: The Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink**, I have to say I'm extremely wary of the company's advances. Blanding's book details Coke's history of anti-union activity in Central and South America, allegations of its fraternization with paramilitaries who murdered bottling plant workers, the effects of marketing to kids in schools, and the wake of environmental catastrophes the company left behind in places like India where Coke has drained and polluted drinking water.'

Lohan says, 'If that's what Coke has in store for Africa, then it looks like the continent is getting the raw end of the deal.'

So there you have it. Once again, King Mswati allows Swaziland to be taken for a ride, for his own personal gain.

### **Swazi Army Not Loyal to King**

*21 January 2011*

If King Mswati III thinks his military forces will defend him in any impending civil uprising<sup>110</sup> he had better think again.

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.hindu.com/mag/2010/09/19/stories/2010091950080400.htm>

<sup>110</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swaziland-lessons-from-tunisia.html>

There is increasing evidence in the kingdom that the Army or so-called 'defence force' is one of the most corrupt institutions in Swaziland.

A report on 'perceptions' of corruption in Swaziland launched by the kingdom's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) named the Defence Force and 'Public Administration' as the most corrupt sectors in Swaziland.

I assume it didn't include King Mswati and the Royal Family in its deliberations because they are considered untouchable. Forbes reported in 2009 that King Mswati has a *personal* fortune estimated at US\$200 million<sup>111</sup> and I can't see how the King could have amassed that wealth honestly.

Swaziland's Defence Force is rotten to its core, according to the ACC.

Alpheous Nxumalo, writing in the *Swazi Observer* speculates that corruption in the Defence Force includes taking bribes for enlistment in the defence force, money for promotions, payment for scholarships involving army cadets, receipt of commissions from contractors / suppliers, irregular expulsion of defence personnel, harassment of junior members of the defence force by the commanding generals, subverting the morale of defence personnel through false reports to the appointing authority, frustrating army officers who advocate for the protection and professional custody of army values and professional ethics.

Nxumalo's list goes on, 'Entrenchment of nepotism and patronage to consolidate the positions of the generals, the rampant misuse of defence assets for personal profits, the deliberate bad decisions that led to the collapse and inefficiency of the defence force air wing; the deliberate flouting/violation of defence policies and regulations to benefit the army authorities is a threat to state security.'

Nxumalo goes on to say, 'It is a kind of threat to the state exactly as the same level of a threat of war.' Nxumalo concludes that the corrupt generals should be sacked. Quite right too, but I suspect if that ever happens there won't be many generals left.

The corrupt 'everyone for himself mentality' in the Defence Force demonstrates that no commander has loyalty to the King. Their loyalty is to themselves – and whosoever will continue to allow them to keep their snouts in the trough, should the King be forced into exile.

So, the good news is the generals won't necessarily side with King Mswati when the uprising starts. The bad news is that they won't be on the side of the people either.

At heart Swaziland's military are simply mercenaries: ready to serve whoever will give them the most.

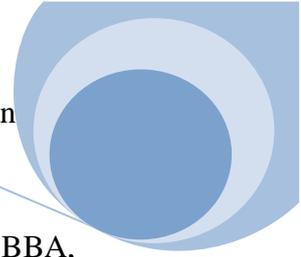
## **Big Brother is not Watching Swaziland**

*22 January 2011*

Swazi newspapers are getting their knickers in a twist because the television 'reality show' Big Brother Africa 6 (BBA6) won't be auditioning for contestants in Swaziland.

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<sup>111</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/07/swaziland-king-keeps-coining-it-in.html>



But why are they surprised? Swaziland was excluded from the previous five series of BBA, so nothing's different now.

In last year's (2010) series (BBA5) 14 'housemates' were put together in a house, locked away from the world, and had cameras following them for 24 hours a day for three months.

The point of the game is that viewers are asked from time to time to nominate one of the housemates for eviction from the house. This goes on until everybody except one person is voted off and that person is declared the winner. The winner gets to go away with US\$200,000 (about E1.4 million).

Swazis are not invited to audition for a place in the house because not enough people in the kingdom subscribe to DSTV, the satellite television company that broadcasts Big Brother. And Swazi people are just too poor (seven in ten earn less than US\$1 a day) to be attractive to advertisers.

This will be the sixth years that Big Brother Africa has been broadcast, but the programme format has been around since the 1990s when it started in the Netherlands. Local versions of the programme have been broadcast around the world since. In its day it was one of the most successful programme formats in the history of television, but in many countries it has past its 'sell-by' date and has been dropped.<sup>112</sup>

Back in the 1990s, the programme makers made all kinds of claims for Big Brother. They said it was a social experiment to see how people would react to living so closely to one another without a break and for such a long period. Sociologists and psychologists rushed to praise the programme for its intellectual insights.<sup>113</sup>

Nobody seriously says that kind of thing now. It didn't take too long before the truth came out. The reality of this 'reality television' programme was money. That's why it took more than a decade to reach Africa – there's not much money in the continent.

Here's how it works. The BBA6 programme makers want 14 contestants from across Africa. Instead of auditioning people across the continent and taking the best people they can find they will only look in Africa's richer nations. That's why they won't bother to come to Swaziland.

BBA6 will choose no more than one person from any single country so they can spread the interest in the programme around the continent. Countries to be represented include Angola, Botswana, Kenya and South Africa.

Big Brother is targeted at a very particular audience of young people. To be attractive to sponsors and advertisers the audience need to be in well-paying jobs and have money to spend on the goods and services advertisers want to sell.

Advertisers who use television have trouble reaching younger adults, so Big Brother is always aimed specifically at these kinds of people. The programme wants the audience to

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<sup>112</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11233617>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=152650&sectioncode=26>

relate to the participants so they chose men and women to take part who come from a very narrow social demographic.

Usually the housemates are aged in their twenties. They don't have run-of-the-mill jobs in the real world. In BBA5<sup>114</sup> contestants had jobs such as 'radio DJ', 'business owner', 'radio producer', 'events coordinator', 'film maker and actor', 'musician and broadcaster', 'writer, director and actor', 'actress, musician and model'. This range of occupations is hardly typical of the average African.

Even though the Swazi people are too poor to be attractive to the programme makers, they are being exploited for some of their cash.

MTN, the only cell phone company in Swaziland, sponsors the programme and rakes in the cash by encouraging viewers to send SMS messages to the programme. You also need a cell phone to be able to cast your vote to evict a housemate.

A spokeswoman for DSTV in Swaziland tried to divert attention away from the real cause of Swaziland's exclusion by saying that some viewers in the kingdom illegally got their service from neighbouring South Africa and this made it look like fewer people in Swaziland were DSTV viewers. This, she claimed, was the reason why Swaziland was not to be represented in BBA6.

According to a report in the *Swazi Observer*, the spokeswoman even went so far as to urged viewers to 'demonstrate patriotism' by taking the DSTV service from Swaziland rather than from South Africa.

What she didn't say was that people take the South African service because it broadcasts more live English Premier League football matches than its Swazi counterpart. It's nothing to do with 'patriotism' or BBA.

## **EU Not Fooled on Political Parties**

*24 January 2011*

Nobody needs to worry that the European Union (EU)<sup>115</sup> is being fooled into thinking that King Mswati III is about to allow political parties to operate in Swaziland, the kingdom he rules as sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The idea that the EU is being misled surfaced after news that David Matse,<sup>116</sup> the Swazi Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, met with members of the African United Democratic Party (AUDP) was published in the *Times of Swaziland*.

The *Times* reported, 'Political observers we cannot name said the government meeting with AUDP was a smokescreen as it was solely convened to lead the EU into believing that there was a genuine dialogue over the registration of political parties.'

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<sup>114</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_Brother\\_Africa\\_5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Brother_Africa_5)

<sup>115</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/no-eu-support-for-swazi-budget.html>

<sup>116</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/09/new-minister-not-kings-love-rival.html>

AUDP has been pressing the Swazi Government to unban political parties in time for the next election in 2013. Parties have been banned since 1973 following a proclamation by King Sobhuza II, after Swazi people dared to elect a political party that King Sobhuza didn't like.

The EU became involved because Matse and some of his colleagues met with an EU delegation the day after his meeting with the AUDP.

If it really was Matse's intention to 'fool' the EU, he was wasting his time. The meeting he had with the EU was a regular 'Article 8' meeting that is held every six months. The EU delegation members are old hands at dealing with the Swazi Government. They have been around long enough to know that you can't trust a word the government says. The government can make as many promises as it wants, but it's what it actually does that matters. And as we all know Barnabas Dlamini, the illegally-appointed Prime Minister of Swaziland, who is presently embroiled in a corruption scandal about government land,<sup>117</sup> is not a man to be trusted.

As an example, just think of all the international conventions Swaziland has signed on subjects such as human rights, civil rights and gender rights. All signed, but not implemented. And as for the Swaziland Constitution – we all know that's not worth the paper it's printed on.

Meanwhile, what about the AUDP? It wants political parties to operate in Swaziland, but it supports the present Tinkhundla system of government. Like the Imbokodvo National Movement, that has been in the headlines for the past three weeks after news emerged<sup>118</sup> there were attempts to reform it, AUDP seems to pose no threat to the established order.

Or maybe it does. One source told me of being approached by a leader of the AUDP who wanted to know where he could purchase weapons. Leaders of the AUDP have also been approaching foreign embassies seeking to raise funds. The *Times* reported that Canada had been approached for E5 million (about US\$450,000).

I hear that the AUDP has had its approaches to embassies rebuffed. This is hardly surprising because no foreign government could be seen to be openly financing an opposition party in Swaziland. It was naive of the AUDP to make the approach. Even more naively, I am told, upon being told that it could not be openly supported, the AUDP, asked to be funded 'indirectly'.

The AUDP has also angered the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), the best known of the opposition groups in Swaziland (and one that wants to see the present political system in Swaziland changed radically). The media constantly refer to AUDP as a 'breakaway' from PUDEMO.

In a statement<sup>119</sup> yesterday (23 January 2011), PUDEMO said, 'PUDEMO has neither links nor history with the AUDP. We share nothing in common ideologically and otherwise. The formation of the AUDP has got nothing to do with PUDEMO – period! We cannot recall in

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<sup>117</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/swazi-pm-steals-from-people.html>

<sup>118</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/plot-to-revive-swazi-kings-party.html>

<sup>119</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/pudemmo-not-linked-to-audp.html>

our history where the founders of the AUDP decided to walk out of PUDEMO and announce they were breaking away to form their own organization.’

That seems clear enough.

### **Plots, Intrigue and Swaziland’s King Mswati**

*25 January 2011*

King Mswati III must be a very worried man at news that court papers relating to a treason trial held in secret shortly after he came to the throne have come to light after 23 years.

The papers, which were deliberately removed from Swaziland after the trial in 1987 and have been unearthed in Namibia, could contain details about the plotting that surrounded King Mswati’s rise to power. The papers might also remind the King’s subjects that he is really only where he is today because of political intrigue. Put simply, a political group plotting within the ruling elite of Swaziland supported him. Does he owe his position and wealth to them – and who knows, if that same group wanted to withdraw its support what happens next?

Unlike in many societies that still have monarchs, in Swaziland the eldest child (often only the son is eligible) of a deceased monarch doesn’t simply become king once the reigning monarch dies. The king is said to be chosen in accordance with Swazi law and custom. But the part of Swazi law and custom relating to the selection of a successor to a king is unknown to a majority of ordinary Swazi.

The story of how King Mswati, who was known as Prince Makhosetive as a child, became the monarch goes like this, according to one biography.<sup>120</sup>

‘King Sobhuza II had deftly managed to hold rivalling power factions within the royal ruling alliance in check, and so his death in August 1982, left a power vacuum.’

At this time Makhosetive was 15 years old and a schoolboy at Sherborne in England.

‘In keeping with tradition, Makhosetive’s appointment by his father was not publicly announced. Before his death the King had chosen one of his queens, the childless Princess Dzeliwe, to preside over the monarchy as regent until the prince turned 21 years of age.

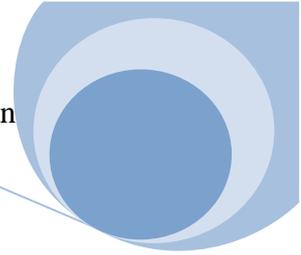
‘It was in keeping with tradition that she be childless, so that she would not involve herself in a factional struggle to advance the position of her own son. Factional quarrels broke out into the open, however, in the interregnum period, while the prince was [at school] in the United Kingdom.

‘Continuing disputes led members of the Likoqo, a supreme traditional advisory body, to force the Queen Regent to resign. In her stead the Likoqo appointed Queen Ntombi, Prince Makhosetive’s mother, who initially refused to take up the position.’

Further disputes between royal factions led to his coronation as King Mswati III, in April 1986, three years earlier than expected.

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<sup>120</sup> <http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2975/Mswati-III-King-Swaziland.html>



At the time, the King was the youngest monarch in the world.

‘Observers saw the early coronation as an attempt on the part of the Liqoqo to legitimate the usurpation of Dzeliwe and consolidate their gains in power. Prince Makhosetive, now King Mswati III, acted quickly however to disband the Liqoqo and call for parliamentary elections.’

Another biography takes up the story.<sup>121</sup> ‘In May 1986 Mswati dismissed the Liqoqo, the traditional advisory council to regents, which had assumed greater powers than were customary. In July 1986 he dismissed and charged with treason Prime Minister Prince Bhekimpi and several government officials for their role in the ejection of Queen Regent Dzeliwe, though he eventually pardoned those who were convicted.’

Another biography<sup>122</sup> of King Mswati says, ‘King Mswati’s first two years of rule were characterized by a continuing struggle to gain control of the government and consolidate his rule.’

‘Immediately following his coronation, Mswati disbanded the Liqoqo and revised his cabinet appointments. In October 1986, Prime Minister Bhekimpi Dlamini was dismissed and for the first time a non-royal, Sotsha Dlamini, was chosen for the post.’

‘Prince Bhekimpi and 11 other important Swazi figures were arrested in June 1987. [Prince] Mfanasibili, [Prince] Bhekimpi, and eight others were convicted of high treason. Eight of those convicted, however, were eventually pardoned.’

‘In early 1989, rumors circulated to the effect that Prince Mfanasibili had attempted to orchestrate a coup while in prison. Other rumors suggested that Mfanasibili was planning an escape from prison for the purpose of mounting a coup. After Mswati’s coronation, royal infighting and intrigue remained very much an aspect of Swazi governance.’

According to the *Times Sunday*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, the court papers that have just come to light relate to the trial of Prince Mfanasibili, Robert Mabila and George Msibi, three of the men convicted of treason. They are now said to want redress from the present Swazi Government. Mabila had been sentenced to eight years imprisonment and Prince Mfanasibili and Msibi were given 15-year jail terms. They were released after an order from King Mswati III in 1988.

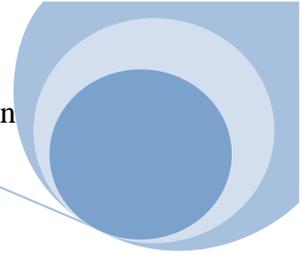
I doubt if it is entirely a coincidence but on 15 January 2011 Prince Mfanasibili called his family together for a private meeting in which he is said to have given his version of the events surrounding the treason case. Some details of the ‘private’ meeting were reported in the *Times of Swaziland* yesterday (24 January 2011).

Until now the treason court judgement has remained secret. If the three men seeking redress from the government press their case, it is difficult to see how the details can remain secret much longer.

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<sup>121</sup> <http://www.mazalien.com/queens-of-swaziland.html>

<sup>122</sup> [Leadership - Swaziland http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/World-Leaders-2003/Swaziland-LEADERSHIP.html#ixzz1BxlOdIpy](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/World-Leaders-2003/Swaziland-LEADERSHIP.html#ixzz1BxlOdIpy)



## King Sacks Political Party Plotters

28 January 2011

To nobody's great surprise Mathendele Dlamini, a member of King Mswati III's advisory council Liqoqo, and Sam Mkhombe, the King's Private Secretary, have been fired for their part in trying to re-form the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM).<sup>123</sup>

The pair were called to Lozitha yesterday (27 January 2011) and given the boot. They had previously been suspended on the instructions of the King, pending an investigation.<sup>124</sup>

The two men were said to have been trying to revive the defunct INM, a party created by King Mswati's father, King Sobhuza II, as a front for the Royal Family's interests. King Sobhuza banned all political parties in 1973 and they have remained banned ever since.

The King's supporters are saying that the two men were sacked because they used the name of the King in their attempts to get people to join the INM. Dlamini and Mkhombe reportedly said they had the King's permission to reform the party.

The Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) in a statement said Dlamini and Mkhombe had tried to revive the INM, which it described as a 'royal instrument of constitutional subversion'.

SSN said, 'After having met with very influential members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>125</sup> the two were privy to the fact that Swaziland could no longer be taken seriously under the prevailing political system. The pressure to unban political parties has mounted to inescapable levels. As a result they sought to respond to this by being proactive and laying the groundwork for their king to have something to fall on when political parties are finally unbanned.

'It was also out of personal ambitions for power because this program was not first discussed with the man in charge. Yet again, given his [the King's] state of mind lately who can blame them for that?'

SSN said the two men were later stabbed in the back and reported to King Mswati. SSN said, '... King Mswati saw nothing but a ploy to remove him from power in this plan. As a result he suspended them pending investigations and then eventually fired them.'

Meanwhile, Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary-General of the Swaziland Federation of Labour, said the firing of Dlamini and Mkhombe was meant to scare people off forming political parties.

He told the *Times of Swaziland* there were civil servants who belong to political parties who would now fear coming out to the open.

He said, 'It means we are still far from political parties. Why is a person fired for talking about reviving a political party if that is the real reason they have been fired? The Attorney

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<sup>123</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/plot-to-revive-swazi-kings-party.html>

<sup>124</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swaziland-king-is-running-scared.html>

<sup>125</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/imf-wants-more-drastic-action.html>

General said political parties had not been banned, so why fire these people for talking about the revival of Imbokodvo?’

He told the *Times* people should however have no fear. ‘It will be foolhardy to think that the 2013 elections will be held under the current system of governance. People will demand political parties,’ he said.

### **King’s Pal Gets Special Health Treatment**

*30 January 2011*

In Swaziland, there’s one rule for the pals of King Mswati III, and another rule for everyone else.

This is confirmed by the case of Jim Gama,<sup>126</sup> the ‘traditional prime minister’ of Swaziland who has received financial support ‘from the King’ to travel to South Africa for medical treatment after he suffered a stroke.

Meanwhile, ordinary Swazi people, including cancer sufferers, have been denied treatment in South African hospitals because the Swazi Government won’t pay the bills.

Jim Gama first. He is the ‘traditional’ prime minister of Swaziland and that makes him more important than Barnabas Dlamini, the ‘real’ prime minister. It also makes Gama one of King Mswati’s most important supporters. In Swaziland, when there is a dispute over the kingdom’s two laws (cultural or constitutional), cultural law trumps constitutional law. When Gama pronounces on a matter<sup>127</sup>, he speaks with more authority than Barnabas Dlamini.

Gama has been sick since suffering a stroke in 2009 and Swaziland’s appalling health service hasn’t been able to treat him. So, Gama has been sent off to Johannesburg, South Africa, for treatment. He left Swaziland on Friday (28 January 2011) in a Ministry of Health ambulance, accompanied by a senior nurse.

The *Weekend Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, reported that over the past two years the King has seen to it that ‘Gama receives the best treatment from premier hospitals in the country [Swaziland] and in South Africa to heal him of the effects of a stroke he suffered’.

The newspaper said ‘the King’ also pays ‘a substantial allowance’ to Gama’s wife who looks after him. It is not clear if this money comes out of the King’s own pocket (he has a personal fortune estimated by Forbes 2009 to be \$US200 million)<sup>128</sup>, as the newspaper also reported that assistance came from a health fund administered by the King’s Office and another at Tibiyo TakaNgwane (which is the conglomerate of businesses that the King owns ‘on behalf of the nation’).

Bhekie Dlamini, Chief Officer in the King’s Office, told the newspaper that the King was a caring father and leader. Dlamini said there were many people from all backgrounds who had received assistance from him, be it in education, health or other challenges they may face.

<sup>126</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/08/swazi-women-told-do-not-march.html>

<sup>127</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/11/talk-about-swaziland-king-banned.html>

<sup>128</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/07/swaziland-king-keeps-coining-it-in.html> in

'It is just that we do not go to the roof top to pronounce to the world what the King has done to help his people,' Dlamini said.

So, Gama, the King's pal is well taken care of. What about the rest of the King's subjects, seven in ten of whom live in abject poverty, earning less than one US dollar a day?

Because Swaziland's health service is so bad, the Swaziland Government administers a fund called Phalala, which allows sick Swazis to travel to hospital in South Africa for treatment, which the Government then pays for.

But, of course, this is the Swazi Government we're talking about here, and the bills don't get paid, so sick people get turned away at the door when they arrive at hospital.

It happens all the time. Earlier this month (January 2011), it was revealed that cancer sufferers who needed chemotherapy treatment were 'blacklisted' by hospitals in South Africa because the government hadn't paid bills for treatment given to previous patients. It was reported that one hospital threatened to recover the outstanding monies from individual patients.

One estimate was that bills amount to E100,000 (\$US 14,000) per patient.

Some of the patients have been receiving calls allegedly from debt collectors hired by some of the doctors to track them down.

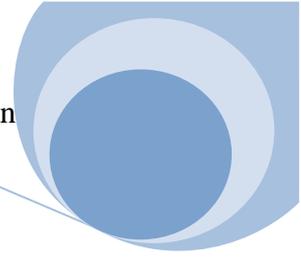
As recently as Friday (28 January 2011), it was reported that a number of patients who were transferred to different hospitals in South Africa had been turned back because government had not settled outstanding payments.

The hospitals would not do some procedures or admit any of the patients from Swaziland unless government paid its bills.

The non-payments are not connected to the present meltdown of the Swaziland economy<sup>129</sup>: the Swazi Government has a long history of incompetence in handling the Phalala fund and there have been many reports of corrupt misuse of monies.

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<sup>129</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/governments-economic-crisis.html>



## 4. February

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### **Police ‘Execute’ Suspect in Street**

*1 February 2011*

A Swazi policeman shot a crime suspect in the head in what looks like an execution-style killing.

The dead man, described by the *Times of Swaziland* newspaper as a Form IV pupil in a school in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa, ‘was executed in front of his brothers’.

The *Times* reports today (1 February 2011) that Mbongeni Masuku ‘was dragged out of the car he was travelling in with his brothers before being shot in the head’.

The killing happened outside a bar in Matsapha, an industrial town in Swaziland.

The *Swazi Observer* quoted Masuku’s uncle Sigayoyo Maphanga who saw the killing.

He said, ‘The police officers, Mfundo and Pompo, came straight for Masuku while they were standing in front of his car and pulled him by his belt.

‘While Mfundo was pulling him (Masuku), he was also threatening to shoot him but Mbongeni never uttered a word.

‘Minutes later, Mfundo shot my nephew at the back of the left ear and he fell on the ground with blood oozing from his mouth and ears. We were all shocked and angered by such brutality from police officers.’

Maphanga said the police took Masuku’s body and loaded it on their van and left.

The *Times* reported that Masuku’s brother David Masuku said police later claimed Masuku died of his injuries at hospital. ‘Mbongeni died on the spot,’ David Masuku told the newspaper.

David Masuku told the newspaper he had been told that his brother might have been killed because of differences he had with the police officer who shot him.

‘This officer would sometimes call on his mobile phone and tell him that ‘tintsaba atihlangani kodvwa banftu bayahlangana’ (This loosely means you can run, but not hide),’ David said.

Police spokeswoman Superintendent Wendy Hleta told the *Observer*, ‘The deceased was shot while trying to escape arrest.’

This killing is not an isolated incident in Swaziland, where police have been involved in a number of controversial shootings.

In October 2010, a suspect was shot six times even though he was handcuffed. Police said he was trying to escape.<sup>130</sup>

In March 2010, police shot a man in cold blood who was trying to surrender to them.<sup>131</sup>

In January 2010, Swazi policeman shot dead a man and critically wounded another when they shot at a car that failed to stop when they instructed.<sup>132</sup>

Also in January 2010, police gunned down three men in cold blood. A man police claimed was shot while running away from them was later found to have bullet wounds in the front of his body.<sup>133</sup>

Swazi police have been criticised for having an unofficial ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy. They have also been involved in a number of heavy-handed attacks on members of the public, including shooting near schoolchildren.

The police have also been firing at protesting students and textile workers who were on a legitimate strike.

### **In Praise of Political Parties**

*3 February 2011*

A lot of hot air is generated in Swaziland about political parties.<sup>134</sup> To some people they are the Devil’s work and part of a dark plot to destroy Swaziland and the Swazi way of life.

This is even though every parliamentary democracy in the world has them and they would be of great benefit to Swaziland if they were allowed to operate properly.

There is nothing sinister about political parties. A political party is simply a collection of people who come together because they have roughly the same set of views and opinions.

But they don’t just meet for a ‘talking shop’; they aim to get political power. In a democracy this is done by getting people to elect your party into government.

In a parliamentary democracy you can have as many political parties as you want. After an election, the leader of the political party that wins the majority of seats in parliament becomes prime minister and appoints the government. If no single party wins a majority, two or more parties in parliament would usually join together to form a coalition government.

Whether there is a majority or a coalition government, there would also be at least one party in parliament that was the ‘opposition’ to the government. This means that there is always an alternative government available to the one in power. If the people don’t like the one in power, they can vote it out at the next election and put another party in government.

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<sup>130</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/kings-paper-on-police-brutality.html>

<sup>131</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/police-shoot-surrendering-man.html>

<sup>132</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/01/yet-another-swazi-police-killing.html>

<sup>133</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/01/swazi-death-cops-evidence-mounts.html>

<sup>134</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/free-political-parties-lie-exposed.html>

And that's why the ruling elite in Swaziland doesn't want political parties – the people can throw out a government they don't like and replace it.

A major benefit of political parties for Swaziland is that parties not only allow people to choose alternative governments, they allow people to discuss alternative policies. There are so many problems in Swaziland at present that a succession of unelected governments has been unable to solve, and because political parties don't exist, no alternative policies have been brought forward. Governments have clearly failed on poverty alleviation, corruption in every fabric of Swazi public life, jobs creation, attracting foreign investment into Swaziland, the HIV pandemic and so.

Since political parties were banned in 1973 by King Sobhuza II's Royal Proclamation, there has been no way for people to create and debate different policies or strategies for Swaziland: and then to choose the path that the kingdom ought to follow.

The present Swazi Government is led by Barnabas Dlamini, the Prime Minister who was elected by nobody, but instead was appointed in contravention of the 2005 Swaziland Constitution by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

Dlamini was not elected for the policies he would pursue while in office. He therefore has no mandate from the people to do anything. And because he has never set out his policies there is no way that people can agree or disagree with him.

Take the example of the present economic crisis in Swaziland. In October 2010, Dlamini took to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>135</sup> a Fiscal Adjustment Roadmap (FAR) of financial measures to try to save the economy. But there had been no debate with the Swazi people about what the FAR should contain, nor were alternative policies put forward and debated before it was finalised.

All we got was Dlamini's plan. And that plan fell at the first hurdle when the foreign investment market refused to buy Swaziland Government Bonds,<sup>136</sup> which Dlamini needed so the government could pay public sector salaries.

With the FAR in shreds there is no economic alternative. If Swaziland had political parties that alternative would already be published and with the consent of the people could be implemented.

Political parties also allow leaders to come through. People can develop their leadership skills within political parties and while part of the parliamentary 'opposition', prior to taking office in government. One great weakness of Swaziland politics at present is the very low calibre of most people in parliament. Many have minimal education and few obvious skills. If political parties existed they could attract people of high calibre who knew that they had the opportunity of contributing to the future of Swaziland. No present day member of the Swazi parliament or senate could honestly say that about themselves.

In the case of Swaziland where there is not democracy at present, we cannot have political parties without changes to the political system. To begin with all seats to the House of

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<sup>135</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/swazi-people-misled-on-imf-support.html>

<sup>136</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/financial-markets-snob-swaziland.html>

Assembly and the Senate must be open to election with none in the patronage of King Mswati, as now.

Second, the Swaziland Constitution must be respected. The constitution allows for all of the following, and if political parties are to operate properly we must have them: freedom of organisation; freedom of speech and assembly; provision of a fair and peaceful competition; everyone to be included in the electoral process; media access and fair reporting and transparent and accountable financing of political parties.

### **Swazi King Fails to Lead – Again**

*5 February 2011*

King Mswati III failed to show leadership in getting the kingdom out of its economic disaster.

The best he could come up with at the state opening of parliament yesterday (4 February 2011) was to tell his subjects they must ‘work harder’.

But, how can the 7,000 public servants who must lose their jobs because successive governments handpicked by the King himself have destroyed the Swazi economy be expected to work harder?<sup>137</sup>

And, how are the countless workers in the private sector who have lost their jobs because the government headed by Barnabas Dlamini has gone broke and can no longer buy goods and services from local companies?

In a breath-taking show of economic illiteracy, King Mswati told his subjects, ‘Each one of us should put in an extra effort so that we can double our national output.’

Does King Mswati know what ‘double our national output’ actually means?

The King showed he had no real grasp of Swaziland’s economic misfortune when he told his subjects, Swaziland would ‘continue to attract investors to the kingdom of eswatini because we remain a safe, peaceful and stable environment for investment’.

The truth, of course, is that Swaziland has not been able to attract investors. Only last week the Central Bank of Swaziland could sell only one-fifth of the E750 million (US\$106 million) bonds it needed to so the government could pay its short term expenses, including public sector wages.<sup>138</sup>

King Mswati also said that Swaziland would ‘continue to create a friendly environment for local and foreign investors. We shall endeavour to encourage businesses to expand their operations locally.’ But as all international indices show, Swaziland is one of the worst nations on earth to set up businesses. And that’s why so many companies give the kingdom a wide berth when it comes to investment.

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<sup>137</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-government-to-blame-for-crisis.html>

<sup>138</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/financial-markets-snob-swaziland.html>

Of course, no media in Swaziland is drawing attention to this. Worse they are hailing the King as a great leader. Musa Ndlangamandla,<sup>139</sup> editor-in-chief of the *Swazi Observer* group, the newspapers in effect owned by King Mswati, wrote in the *Weekend Observer* today, that the king 'laid down the roadmap for Swaziland to unshackle itself from the quick slide to economic abyss into which it has plunged since 2003'. Did he? I'd invite Ndlangamandla to point to the bit of the speech where he did that.

Ndlangamandla also wrote that the king showed evidence of 'maturity and astute leadership'. Again, Ndlangamandla, show me the words.

The sad truth is all that we got from King Mswati yesterday were generalities and platitudes. Last week all that he could come up with was an exhortation to his subjects to pray to get the kingdom out of the economic mess.<sup>140</sup>

We are no nearer solving the economic meltdown and pretending that we are will not help at all.

### **Sikhuphe Airport is Too Small**

*8 February 2011*

The Sikhuphe International Airport presently being built will have no taxiway.

That means the airport will not be able to handle large numbers of planes taking off and landing.

And this will severely limit the number of passengers and amount of cargo the airport can handle when (if?) it opens.

Until now we have been told that the airport, a vanity project of King Mswati III, will be a major hub for the whole of the southern African region.<sup>141</sup> That means intercontinental planes will land at Sikhuphe and passengers will transfer to other aircraft to complete their journey to nearby countries. Some passengers will disembark and stay in Swaziland.

To handle large numbers of passengers, the airport needs to be able to get planes to fly off quickly and land quickly. Once one plane is safely on the ground after landing it drives out of the way on the taxiway to allow another plane to land or take off on the runway it has just vacated.

One of the most commonly known types of taxiway is the parallel taxiway, which is narrower than the conventional runways and runs alongside it. But with no taxiway, once a plane lands it will have to back up along the runway to take passengers to the terminal, thereby blocking the runway for any other plane wanting to land or take off.

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<sup>139</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/swazi-observer-is-propaganda.html>

<sup>140</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/prayerful-king-lets-subjects-down.html>

<sup>141</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/11/airport-is-swaziland-kings-folly.html>

Another piece of evidence that suggests we may have been misled about the capacity of Sikhuphe can be found in promotional literature published jointly by Swaziland's Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and Vector Management Limited.<sup>142</sup>

It says Sikhuphe International airport 'will be able to handle unprecedented volumes of international passenger and freight traffic in and out of the region'.

'Unprecedented' means 'never before seen', but the same leaflet says a 1,000 sq m cargo facility at the airport is designed to handle '5,000 tonnes of mixed cargo per annum'. Five thousand tonnes in a whole year – I very much hope that's a misprint.

And there's more evidence that Sikhuphe will turn out to be very small beer indeed. In July 2010, the *Times of Swaziland* reported the airport was expecting to handle up to 300,000 passengers per year and the terminal was designed to handle about 300 people per hour. Three hundred thousand people per year works out at 822 people per day on average: not even enough to fill two 'Jumbo Jet' planes.

By contrast, in South Africa, Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport, less than an hour's flight from Sikhuphe, caters for more than 17 million passengers each year.<sup>143</sup> Cape Town International Airport recorded passenger numbers of 7.8 million in 2008-2009.<sup>144</sup> Even Blomfentien Airport, which has no pretensions at all, handled 408,000 passengers in 2008-2009.<sup>145</sup>

There is a prediction that when all the bills are in and Sikhuphe eventually opens it will have cost \$US1 billion – that works out at \$US1,000 for every man, woman and child in the kingdom.<sup>146</sup>

So is Sikhuphe International Airport a big waste of money? You decide.

### **School Principal Publicly Flogs Adults**

*19 February 2011*

A megalomaniac school principal in Swaziland has been giving out public floggings to adults who date girls from his school.

The men are forced to attend in front of the entire school, lie down on a bench and receive a whipping. The girls are also flogged.

Edward Khayoni, principal at Elangeni High School, says that if in the usual course of events his pupils are subjected to corporal punishment, why shouldn't the adults?

Khayoni is annoyed that some female pupils at his school are having 'love affairs' with men, according to a report in the *Weekend Observer* newspaper.

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<sup>142</sup> <http://www.sikhupheinternationalairport.com/>

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.sikhupheinternationalairport.com/>

<sup>144</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape\\_Town\\_International\\_Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Town_International_Airport)

<sup>145</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_South\\_African\\_airports\\_by\\_passenger\\_movements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_South_African_airports_by_passenger_movements)

<sup>146</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/sikhuphe-cost-soars-to-1bn.html>

The ages of the pupils are not disclosed, but in Swaziland it is common for people to still be attending school in their late teens and twenties.

Khayoni says that if the men dubbed 'Romeos' by the newspaper refuse to take their whipping, he threatens to tell the man's wife about the affair.

'The idea is to humiliate them so that they are discouraged. We do not have any law to engage effectively in discouraging love affairs with the girls. Girls nowadays are after money to buy petty things such as lunches. We have not had a case of proven sexual intercourse so far and we hope our method will be very effective in preventing such cases from happening,' Khayoni told the *Observer*.

Khayoni said when the man is asked why he was going out with a girl he apologises and admits it is wrong.

Then he is told that the school applies corporal punishment to pupils who break rules in this fashion and such punishment is meted by lying on a bench and be whipped in front of everybody.

Khayoni told the newspaper he could not remember how many cases have been handled this way because in the past there were many, but since schools opened this year there had been only one case.

### **King's Friend Gaddafi Turns Army on Own People**

*21 February 2011*

One of Swaziland King Mswati III's closest allies has used his army to attack his own people, killing hundreds of them, in a desperate bid to cling on to power.

Thousands of prodemocracy protesters are on the streets of Libya to force Colonel Muammar Gaddafi from office.

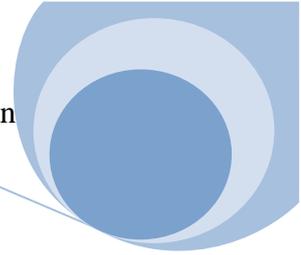
King Mswati is a close ally of Gaddafi and has made trips to Libya for talks about securing business and financial aid for the kingdom Mswati rules as sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

Gaddafi has been caught up in the wave of prodemocracy demonstrations sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. His preferred method of staying in power is to slaughter protesters. At least 200 have been shot by his troops, but many more may have been killed. Reports from Libya are incomplete because of a news blackout in the country.

King Mswati is a political ally and appears also to be a close friend of Gaddafi. In 2001, when King Mswati was struck down with a mystery illness (widely believed at the time to be caused by deliberate poisoning) Gaddafi flew a team of doctors to Swaziland to treat the king.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/swazi-queen-flies-out-after-king-falls-ill-1.64756>



In 2009, Gaddafi sent the king six camels as ‘a token of friendship’.<sup>148</sup>

One of the King’s sons, Prince Sicalo, is believed to be presently undergoing intensive military training in Libya.

Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of Swaziland, was in Libya as recently as October 2010.

King Mswati must be keeping a close eye on his friend’s problems in Libya to see what he can learn from the situation that might help him to save his own skin.

In Swaziland, there is now open talk that ‘social unrest’ may come soon.

In his budget speech on Friday (18 February 2011), Finance minister Majozi Sithole said it was possible that the government ‘will no longer be able to pay salaries in the near future, with devastating potential consequences for our civil servants, our banks, our businesses and social peace.’

On the same day, the AFP news agency reported Vincent Dlamini, secretary-general Swaziland National Public Services and Allied Workers' Union, saying, ‘If the economy goes down, people will rise up for political change.’

Musa Hlophe, coordinator of the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations (SCCCO), writing in the *Times Sunday* yesterday (20 February 2011), predicted, ‘A looming conflict here in Swaziland is gathering clouds as a storm, but the authorities do not seem to appreciate it and neither is the general public paying any attention to it.’

He added, ‘The people simply want change now!’

Plans are underway for a national protest in April 2011. A group calling itself the 12 April Uprising has set up a Facebook site<sup>149</sup> where it is calling for mass demonstrations. ‘We pledge, as a group, to create in the next few months the biggest mass movement that the country has ever seen. 2011 will also mark the year when we will topple the royalist regime.’

Mass protest is not unusual in Swaziland. What is different here is the very explicit call to ‘topple’ King Mswati.

### **Proof: King’s Airport is Pointless**

*21 February 2011*

Here’s proof – as if we needed any more – that the Swaziland Government never had a clue why it was necessary to build Sikhuphe Airport, at a possible cost of US\$1 billion.<sup>150</sup>

On Saturday (19 February 2011), Prince Hlangusemphi, Swaziland’s Economic Planning and Development Minister, was quoted in the *Weekend Observer* saying, Sikhuphe’s potential

<sup>148</sup> <http://www.theroyalforums.com/9198-libyan-president-honors-king-of-swaziland-with-camels/>

<sup>149</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_167326423312962](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_167326423312962)

<sup>150</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/sikhuphe-cost-soars-to-1bn.html>

was enormous and it would attract aircraft and ease the ‘congestion suffered by OR [Tambo] International Airport in Johannesburg’

Anyone who’s been paying attention over the past few years will know that OR Tambo underwent a multi-billion Rand development in preparation for the FIFA World Cup held in South Africa last year. Work on a new terminal continues and might be completed in 2012.<sup>151</sup>

That means there is no congestion at OR Tambo – and therefore no potential business for Sikhuphe. And there never was.

So apart from the non-existent overspill from OR Tambo, where else is the business for Sikhuphe? Prince Hlangusemphi told the *Weekend Observer* that the airport would bring ‘large groups of tourists’. But where from?

The Swaziland Tourist Authority (STA) reported last week that most tourists to Swaziland are South African and Mozambican. They come by road, not air.

Eric Maseko, STA Chief Executive Officer, said his marketing department would intensify promoting Swaziland in South Africa and Mozambique in the coming year.

There is not a scrap of evidence that when Sikhuphe airport is open it will attract visitors from further afield. There is already an airport on Swaziland and if tourists want to fly into the kingdom, they can already do so. They don’t want to come in any numbers – and there’s no reason to suppose they will want to with a new airport.

Even the management of the airport recognises that at best 300,000 passengers per year will fly through Sikhuphe. That’s 822 on average per day – fewer than two ‘Jumbo Jets’ full of people.

The Prince also talked about Sikhuphe bringing ‘business and employment opportunities’. What are these exactly? Certainly, there have been opportunities for non-Swazi companies to make money on the construction of the airport and the roads running to it. But what about the ordinary Swazi? The best they have gotten is unskilled work. Once the airport opens there will be opportunities for jobs in baggage handling (but not many with so few planes coming and going), cleaning and general clerical work. Not much for a US\$1 billion cost.

And remember, the billion is the cost of getting the thing built; it doesn’t include the day-to-day running costs to keep the underused airport open.

A total of another E469 million is being set aside in this year’s national budget for Sikhuphe – at a time when government department budgets are being slashed by 20 percent, on top of the 14 percent cut in the past year.

What a waste of money. E469 million is nearly the total amount (E489 million) the government intends to spend on tertiary level student scholarships and the cost of running the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) combined in the coming year. But Majozie Sithole, the Finance Minister, says Swaziland can no longer afford to award scholarships in future.

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<sup>151</sup> <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/south-africa/johannesburg-o-r-tambo-international-airport>

Of course it can't, it's wasted the money on Sikhuphe Airport, King Mswati III's vanity project.

### **Government Misleads on Poverty Reduction**

*25 February 2011*

The Swaziland Government wants us to believe there has been a 'significant' drop in poverty in the kingdom – but we are not fooled.

The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development released a report yesterday (24 February 2011) showing that the poverty level in Swaziland was 63 percent – down from 69 percent ten years ago, when the last survey was taken.

This drop, according to a report from the Ministry, was 'modest but still significant'. Modest, yes: significant, no.

Look at the figures. The actual number of poor people in Swaziland fell from 678,500 to 641,000 within the past decade. That's a drop of 37,500 *over ten years*. That averages out at 3,700 per year. There are still 641,000 people in poverty in Swaziland and at the rate of 3,700 per year it will take 173 years before all the people are out of poverty.

The report called **Poverty in a Decade of Slow Economic Growth: Swaziland in the 2000s** claimed that Swazi people had benefitted from the average two per cent economic growth experienced over the last 10 years.

Some people may have benefitted, but it certainly wasn't the poor. Missing from the report was any indication of how much money the top 10 percent richest people in Swaziland had.

'Poverty' in the report was defined as households with an income of less than E461 per (US\$65) month, per adult. Or US\$2 per day.

But three in ten people live in the most abject poverty in Swaziland, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The King takes about E300,000 from the national budget each and every day of the year for himself and his Royal Family.<sup>152</sup>

The report stated, 'Overall nearly three in 10 persons fall short of meeting their daily nutritional needs and the situation remains the same as the beginning of the decade.'

This is not the first time the Swaziland Government has tried to falsely claim that it is making headway in reducing poverty. In October 2010, the Swazi Government doctored an official report to the United Nations on how much progress Swaziland had made on reaching a Millennium Development Goal.<sup>153</sup> The government changed it from reading 'not likely' to meet the target of 'eradication of extreme poverty and hunger' and made it read that it could 'potentially' meet the target.

<sup>152</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/12/cost-of-swaziland-royal-family.html>

<sup>153</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/10/attack-on-lying-swazi-government.html>

## 5. March

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### **Levitating Jele Killed Himself – Inquest Verdict**

*5 March 2011*

Sipho Jele, who died in state custody, levitated to the ceiling unaided, tied an old piece of blanket around a beam and then around his own neck and then allowed himself to fall to the ground, thereby killing himself by hanging.<sup>154</sup>

That was the verdict at the inquest into his death delivered yesterday (4 March 2011).

All right, the Swaziland coroner didn't say it quite that way, but that's what Swazi coroner Nondumiso Simelane expects us to believe.

Here's what she actually said – as reported by the *Weekend Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III,

*'Further, although there was nothing found at the scene which the deceased could have used as a platform on which to stand to commit the suicide; upon closer examination of the scene and the photos of the deceased captured at the scene, and the pathologists concluding that "it is possible for the deceased to have mounted himself upwards from the floor and then suspended himself without the use of a platform," and that "after the ligature was applied to the beam and neck he could have lowered himself and the feet would still be above the floor."*

Simelane says it was her considered opinion that Jele's death was due to suicide.

Jele was arrested on 1 May 2010 for wearing a T-shirt supporting the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), an organisation banned in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

He died later at the Sidwashini Remand Correctional Institution. He was found hanging from a beam in a shower block.

Barnabas Dlamini, the illegally-appointed Prime Minister of Swaziland,<sup>155</sup> who has a record of human rights abuses several miles long,<sup>156</sup> said yesterday the truth about Jele's death had finally come out.

Who does he think he's kidding?

### **Swaziland Censors BBC Radio**

*9 March 2011*

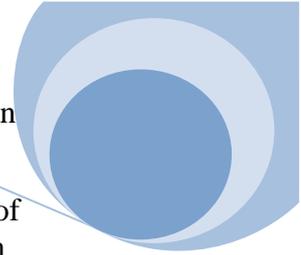
The Swaziland Government is censoring BBC broadcasts in the kingdom.

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<sup>154</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/07/swazi-activists-death-not-suicide.html>

<sup>155</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/07/swazi-activists-death-not-suicide.html>

<sup>156</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/new-pm-enemy-of-freedom.html>



This is because last week the BBC broadcast two items that were broadly supportive of people fighting for democracy in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

Nelisiwe Shongwe, Minister of Information, Communication and Technology, said yesterday (8 March 2011) that the **Focus on Africa** Programme that is broadcast in its entirety on state-run radio, SBIS would in future be 'edited' before broadcast.

The *Swazi Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, reported her saying that as a Swazi nation, people should understand that there were some pieces of information that could not just be sent to the people. She said they had to consider the impact that information would have.

The *Observer* reported she said the programme was being 'delayed by the editing process'.

The newspaper did not give details of the content of the programmes complained of.

In fact they were two features by reporter Louise Redvers broadcast on separate days last week. The first talked to people who see the present economic meltdown in Swaziland as an opportunity to press for democratic change.<sup>157</sup>

The second talked to people who said they were prepared to put their lives on the line to campaign for freedom in the kingdom. Redvers interviewed a student leader, a journalist and a human rights campaigner.<sup>158</sup> They all knew that it was 'suicidal' to challenge the king – but nonetheless they were prepared to do so. As one interviewee said, the level of oppression keeps people quiet, but the rulers can't keep the lid closed.

The censorship was criticised in the Swazi House of Assembly. MP Robert Magongo said that the government was acting dangerously.

He said what government was doing was the equivalent to lying to the people by wanting to only have the minister's opinion broadcast.

The *Observer* reported he said such behaviour by government had the potential to spark a riot among the people.

### **Minister Denies BBC Censorship**

*10 March 2011*

Nelisiwe Shongwe, Swaziland's Minister of Information, Communication and Technology, has denied that the Swazi Government is censoring BBC radio broadcasts in the kingdom.

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157 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2011/03/110301\\_swaziland\\_economy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2011/03/110301_swaziland_economy.shtml)

158 <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/bbc-reports-opposition-buoyant.html>

As reported yesterday<sup>159</sup> (9 March 2011), Shongwe had told parliament that the **Focus on Africa** Programme that is broadcast in its entirety on state-run radio, SBIS would in future be 'edited' before broadcast.

She was reported saying that as a Swazi nation, people should understand that there were some pieces of information that could not just be sent to the people. She said they had to consider the impact that information would have.

The programme had been kept off the air for several days following two reports by Louise Redvers that allowed Swazi people to voice their opposition to King Mswati III.

News of the censorship went around the world, prompting Shongwe to issue a statement to the BBC, saying that there was no 'censorship'. Instead, she said, the Swazi Government wanted to edit out 'profane' material and 'insults'.

### **Pupil Leaders Beaten By Police**

*10 March 2011*

Twelve Swaziland schoolchildren, accused of being leaders in a class boycott, say they were beaten up by police officers with batons, in their own school, in front of the school's principal.

The pupils of Kubongeni High School say they were called individually into the school's staffroom where the police officers and their principal were. They say they were then assaulted with batons and fists.

The *Times of Swaziland* reports the pupils say they suffered injuries during the beatings and all 12 of them had to seek medical attention at the Mkhuzweni Health Centre and Herefords Clinic. Seven of them did not go to school the next day because of the injuries.

The pupils say they were beaten because they were suspected of being leaders in a boycott that left the school closed for several days. The *Times* reports that the school became suspicious that the pupils were about to organise another boycott, so the police were called.

John Dlamini, the school's principal, told the *Times*, he did call the police, but he did not witness the assaults. 'I did not see the police beating the pupils because I had gone out of the office,' the newspaper reports him saying.

### **Did Swazi PM Offer to Resign, or Not?**

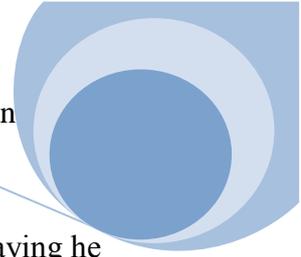
*11 March 2011*

Did Barnabas Dlamini, Swaziland's Prime Minister, offer to resign, or didn't he?<sup>160</sup>

Reports circulated across the world yesterday (10 March 2011) that Dlamini had seen King Mswati III to resign, but the King had refused to accept his resignation.

<sup>159</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-censors-bbc-radio.html>

<sup>160</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/king-refuses-swazi-pm-resignation.html>



Today, the press in Swaziland are reporting a terse statement from Dlamini's office saying he did not offer to resign.

But do we believe it? The *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper, reported the PM's statement, but seems (to me at least) to be less than convinced.

It reports today (11 March 2011) that rumours about his resignation started last week.

'The reports alleged that Dlamini informed his Cabinet of this decision last week Tuesday at their weekly meeting.'

The *Times* reports, 'The resignation was linked with some of the challenges that Cabinet is currently facing, and the explanation was that the Prime Minister had buckled under the pressure. Cabinet has been rocked by an issue of six of its members, including the Prime Minister himself, acquiring Crown land in the city of Mbabane at discounted rates.'<sup>161</sup>

'The issue of the land has been the subject of a parliamentary select committee that has, for the past two months, been probing the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the land.'

'The Prime Minister appeared before the select committee last week Monday. The Chairman, MP Charles Myeza, has indicated that the committee would release its report next week. While the House of Assembly committee was still probing the transactions, the Senate also "bit" into the issue and the Prime Minister walked out in the middle of the debate after he was informed that he was not allowed to make submissions as he is involved.'

'Recently the Prime Minister, in an interview with our sister publication, the *Times Sunday*, said there were people who were out to ruin him.'

'Yesterday, the reports of Dlamini's resigning took another dimension as the banned Swaziland Solidarity Network issued two statements on the Internet.'

'In the first statement SSN announced that Dlamini had resigned and in the second statement, yesterday evening, it alleged that the King had refused to accept the resignation.'

'The Prime Minister yesterday dismissed all these reports as untrue.'

'He said he has not resigned nor has he even considered resigning.'

'Dlamini said he is committed to serving the nation until his term of office expires.'

### **Swazi Police: Another Assault on Schoolchildren**

*14 March 2011*

Another case of Swaziland police beating up schoolchildren who took part in demonstrations has been reported.

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<sup>161</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-pm-under-cosh.html>

Police are said to have assaulted pupils of Mbukwane High School. The *Swazi Observer* reported police went to the homes of the pupils, took them to the police station where they were interrogated 'before being beaten up'. The pupils were said to have been involved in what the newspaper described as a 'riot' at the school last year.

One parent told the newspaper, 'The police were moving from home to home in search of those children they thought were ringleaders. My son was among those who were taken to the police station. I had to take my child to hospital after the beating.'

Another parent said his child was not himself of late as a result of the assault by the police.

Last week, it was reported that 12 schoolchildren from Kubongeni High School, who were accused of being leaders in a class boycott, were beaten up by police officers with batons and fists, in their own school.<sup>162</sup>

### **ANCYL Threat to King Mswati**

*16 March 2011*

South Africa's African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) has turned up the heat ahead of Friday's mass demonstrations in Mbabane to threaten King Mswati III that it will use 'radical action' against the Swaziland state if he allows his security forces to fire on and kill his own people.

'The ANC Youth League would like to specifically caution the Swaziland monarchy and its security forces that if they unleash violence against their own people which leads to the loss of life, we will intervene with even more radical and militant ways of ensuring that there is democracy, peace and freedom in Swaziland,' it said in a statement issued today (16 March 2011).

The ANCYL said, 'The ANC Youth League will employ whatever mechanism available to make sure that the people of Swaziland are liberated, including active border blockades, radical mass protests inside Swaziland and all sorts of campaigns to ensure that anything that is associated with the Swaziland monarchy is isolated in South Africa and the world. The people of Swaziland, like all other people of the oppressed world who have recently liberated themselves, should be allowed the freedom to raise their voices against injustices of the monarchy.'

It added, 'The Swaziland monarchy should by now know that the ANC Youth League does not make empty promises, nor do we pose threats, because any attempt on their part to unleash violence on peaceful protesters will be met by even more radical action from the ANC Youth League and all progressive forces that support democracy and change in Swaziland.'

On Friday (18 March 2011) a mass march is planned by labour unions and students to protest against the government.<sup>163</sup> This is ahead of more protests in April, including an 'uprising' planned for 12 April.

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<sup>162</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/pupil-leaders-beaten-by-police.html>

The ANCYL said it, ‘totally supports the protests led by all civil society, workers and students’ formations in Swaziland against the repressive monarch of King Mswati III’.

It went on, ‘The ANC Youth League is inspired that the people of Swaziland are rising against the repressive royal regime, which for many years has neglected the wellbeing of the people of Swaziland and concentrated on the self-gratification and enrichment of the King, his immediate family, friends and relatives amidst massive poverty, starvation and sicknesses in Swaziland.

‘These should come to an immediate end, and requires the dedication and focus of the people of Swaziland to stand firm and not be intimidated by the monarchy and its Security forces.

‘The people of Swaziland should fight with determination and always know that all peace loving youth of South Africa, Africa and the world are fully behind them.’

The ANCYL said, ‘the fate of the people of Swaziland is intractably linked to the fate of the people of South Africa. The pain and suffering of the people of Swaziland is our pain and suffering and we will forever support all struggles to bring social justice, peace and democracy to Swaziland.

‘The Swaziland monarchy should by now know that the ANC Youth League does not make empty promises, nor do we pose threats, because any attempt on their part to unleash violence on peaceful protesters will be met by even more radical action from the ANC Youth League and all progressive forces that support democracy and change in Swaziland.’

### **Gama, Enemy of Swazi Freedom, Dies**

*16 March 2011*

Jim Gama, the ‘traditional’ prime minister of Swaziland, and an enemy of freedom and progress in the kingdom, has died after a long illness.

He died in a hospital in South Africa, after he was taken there at the request of King Mswati III.

Health services in his kingdom are so poor that the king ensured that his pal was taken out of his kingdom, at the Swazi taxpayer’s expense, to get preferential treatment.<sup>164</sup>

Gama, was ‘traditional’ prime minister and in Swazi culture that placed him higher than the actual prime minister. When Gama pronounced on a subject, it carried more weight than Barnabas Dlamini, the present, ‘official’ prime minister. When Gama spoke, he was assumed to speak with the voice of the king.

A list of Gama’s attack on freedom and progress in Swaziland would fill a book, but here are some of his more recent outrages.

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<sup>163</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/protest-will-halt-swaziland.html>

<sup>164</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/kings-pal-gets-special-treatment.html>

In June 2008, Gama announced that journalists who disrespect King Mswati should die.<sup>165</sup> He said a report published in the *Times of Swaziland* about the financial cost to the kingdom of holding a three-day 'people's parliament' had been 'very disrespectful to royalty and the king'.

According to the *Times Sunday*, Gama said, 'whoever wrote the report should be punished using "umphini" which in Swazi terms means a serious punishment or even death'.

In November 2008, Gama banned all public conversation about the king.<sup>166</sup> This followed some mildly critical comments in Swazi newspapers about the speech King Mswati made introducing Barnabas Dlamini as the king's new appointment as Prime Minister. The king had told Dlamini to get the terrorists and all who supported them.

Gama issued an edict to say that the king's subjects must not refer to the king's speech ever again.

According to the *Swazi News* (22 November 2008), Gama argued that the king 'was in an emotional state when the remarks were made'.

In 2009, Gama led the attacks<sup>167</sup> on dissident Mfomfo Nkhambule who had written a series of informed articles in the *Times* that highlighted injustice and the way the elite groups exploited ordinary people.

Gama accused Nkhambule of disrespecting the king. Gama said, 'The king is the father of the nation hence he deserves to be accorded respect by every citizen at all times.' Nkhambule and his family were harassed by the Swazi authorities and he was eventually forced to give up his writings.

In August 2008, Gama banned women from marching for any reason whatsoever, because it was 'uncultural'.<sup>168</sup> He said, 'Culturally, a woman does not participate in a march. It is traditionally not allowed. Even if they are aggrieved, they should not march.'

The women wanted to march to the real prime minister's office to seek information about a shopping trip that eight of King Mswati's wives had made to Europe. The *Times* reported, 'Their observation is that HIV people in the country were struggling to get their medication yet funds are used on projects they do not even understand. They say elderly people sometimes go without grants yet public funds are used to hire a private plane for such a trip.'

### **Swazi Police 'Will Attack Protesters'**

*17 March 2011*

The Swaziland police and state paramilitary forces are preparing to brutally attack the labour unions' demonstration due in Mbabane tomorrow (Friday 18 March 2011).<sup>169</sup>

<sup>165</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/06/disrespect-swazi-king-and-die-trad-pm.html>

<sup>166</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/11/talk-about-swaziland-king-banned.html>

<sup>167</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/02/new-threat-to-swaziland-dissident.html>

<sup>168</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/08/swazi-women-told-do-not-march.html>

<sup>169</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/protest-will-halt-swaziland.html>

The Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) says there are signals ‘that the regime is preparing to brutally crush the peaceful demonstrations’.

It says in a statement that the Manzini Regional Police Commander ‘has twice this week alone led a battalion of his paramilitary troops to menacingly disrupt civil society meetings aimed at preparing for the marches’.

SUDF says, ‘The streets of Manzini have also since Monday been littered with police officers and prison warders. Leaders of labour unions and the SUDF have been stalked and their mobile phones bugged.’

The SUDF has asked for the international media to publicise the threat and to be present during tomorrow’s protest to witness the anger felt by Swazi people who are demanding multi-party democracy in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch.

‘We invite you to come and see for yourselves so that you can alert the rest of the international community to the scale of human rights violations inside Swaziland. All evidence to this claim will be on display for you on Friday,’ SUDF says.

SUDF is also appealing to the international community to impose targeted sanctions on the collective leadership of the Tinkhundla regime that controls Swaziland.

### **Students Want End to Royal Misrule**

*17 March 2011*

Swazi students say they want the mass protest planned for tomorrow (18 March 2011)<sup>170</sup> to bring down the government and see the end of ‘royal misrule in Swaziland’.

The time has now come ‘for the seizure of power’, says the Swaziland National Union of Students (SNUS).

Students are joining labour unions in a march on the prime minister’s office, in Mbabane.

The SNUS declaration is likely to raise the temperature in the kingdom ruled by King Mswati to boiling point. Already, the Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) has predicted that Swazi police and paramilitaries will attack protesters on the march.<sup>171</sup>

South Africa’s African National Congress Youth league (ANCYL) has also said that if Swazi state forces kill any protesters it will intervene in ‘radical and militant ways’ to ensure there is ‘democracy, peace and freedom in Swaziland’.<sup>172</sup>

In a statement issued today, SNUS says, ‘Tomorrow will mark the end of the royal misrule in Swaziland.’

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<sup>170</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/protest-will-halt-swaziland.html>

<sup>171</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/police-plan-to-attack-protestors.html>

<sup>172</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/s-africa-threat-to-swaziland-king.html>

SNUS says, 'Our demand in tomorrow's protest action is for the government to resign and the immediate establishment of a transitional government that should draft, in consultation with our people, a democratic constitution that will lead us towards free and fair democratic elections.'

'We have lost confidence in the present government and call for it to hand power back to the people.'

The SNUS says it was 'inspired' by the statement of support from ANCYL. 'It did well to boost our confidence and determination to unseat this tyrannical regime.'

The students fear that state forces will attack them at the march tomorrow. 'The regime's intimidating tactics of flooding the country with fully armed police officers parading in a brazen show of military power will not help,' SNUS says.

It goes on, 'We make no apologies that students are angry and warn the army and police not to dare touch us.' It says students will 'defend ourselves in the event we are attacked'.

### **King Mswati, the World is Watching You**

*18 March 2011*

The world will be watching Swaziland today (18 March 2011) to see if the state forces of King Mswati III brutally attack prodemocracy campaigners as they try to peacefully march in Mbabane, the kingdom's capital.

The protesters are so scared that they will be attacked and beaten by police and paramilitaries that yesterday they issued a plea to the world's media to be present to witness what happens.

Labour unions and student groups hope to deliver a petition to the office of Barnabas Dlamini, who, though unelected to the kingdom's sham parliament, was appointed Prime Minister by King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

They want a number of reforms, including the unbanning of political parties and the restructuring of the whole system of government. The students are demanding an end to King Mswati's 'misrule'.<sup>173</sup>

Since February, the political temperature has soared in Swaziland. It is now generally believed among ordinary people that the government is broke and is stealing workers' pension funds to pay daily bills. Public sector workers believe they soon won't get paid at all.

King Mswati continues to ignore the plight of his subjects. To rub salt into their wounds, in last month's national budget while public spending in most departments was slashed by 20 percent, he took a 23 percent increase on last year (and 63 percent increase on the 2009/2010 budget) for himself and his royal family.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swazi-students-end-royal-misrule.html>

<sup>174</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/king-gets-more-his-subjects-less.html>

Nurses have been on strike against the government, demanding and winning payment of allowances the Ministry of Health owed them, but had not paid.<sup>175</sup> Teachers are threatening to bring down the government if they are forced to take wage cuts.<sup>176</sup> Students forced a climb-down over a new policy that would have seen scholarships replaced by loans and all food and accommodation allowances scrapped.<sup>177</sup>

A Facebook site has been gathering support for an ‘uprising’ on 12 April to ‘topple’ the king.

The Swazi Police have a long, inglorious history of intimidation. The torturing of ordinary crime suspects is routine<sup>178</sup> and often goes unremarked by magistrates and judges when victims of police brutality are paraded before them.

But the police, who are badly trained and ill-disciplined, are even worst when protesters take to the streets. They have no idea how to control a crowd without resource to teargas. Whereas police in a civilised country would simply move the crowd along, in Swaziland the canisters fly – and so do the batons.

Then come the rubber bullets: and before long it will be live ammunition.

Time and again we have seen Swazi police over-reacting when they have to deal with a mass of people. They break up student protests, labour union gatherings and even legally held strikes.

When students marched in Mbabane in February, teargas filled the air. And all the youngsters were trying to do was to deliver a petition.

But this time it will be different. There is evidence from activities over the past few days that police and paramilitaries are preparing to attack the demonstrators. Some of the protesters’ demands are so specific in their calls for the overthrow of the government and the monarchy that they pose a threat to the very existence of the state.

The king and his hangers-on will not allow change: at least not without a battle.

Many Swazi people have been encouraged by the wave of protests for democracy across the Middle East and North Africa that has seen tyrants overthrown. They believe something similar could be achieved in Swaziland.

But beware. It hasn’t all gone well for prodemocracy supporters. In Libya, ruled with an iron fist by Col Muammar Gaddafi, troops (many of them mercenaries) have brutally put down dissent.

King Mswati is a great friend of Gaddafi. He likes him so much he sent his eldest son Prince Sicalo to Libya to train as a military pilot.<sup>179</sup> In 2001, when King Mswati was struck down

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<sup>175</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-is-military-state.html>

<sup>176</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/teachers-to-lead-swaziland-revolt.html>

<sup>177</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/students-force-policy-climb-down.html>

<sup>179</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swazi-prince-runs-away-from-libya.html>

with a mystery illness, Gaddafi flew a team of doctors to Swaziland to treat the king. In 2009, Gaddafi sent the king six camels as a token of friendship.<sup>180</sup>

If the king follows Gaddafi's example, there might well be the blood of innocent Swazi protesters on the streets of Mbabane today.

After the protesters' plea, we can expect representatives of the world's largest news agencies to be in town: along with the BBC and many journalists from South Africa. Also, there will be the growing posse of Swaziland's 'social networkers' who blog, tweet and Facebook to readers across the globe.

The world is watching you King Mswati.

### **Armed Police 'All Over Swaziland'**

*18 March 2011*

Heavily armed state security forces are on view all over Swaziland today (18 March 2011) as prodemocracy protesters attempt to march to the Prime Minister's office in the capital, Mbabane.

Messages received via the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) say that security forces are blocking off streets in the commercial city Manzini 'armed to the teeth with various armaments and these include their armoured vehicles, gaspers, water cannons.' Security forces are also 'visible and heavily armed' in 'every corner of the country'.

### **Today's Swaziland Protest Declared 'Illegal'**

*18 March 2011*

The Swazi Government has not given permission for the march in Mbabane today (18 March 2011) to protest against the lack of democracy and the economic meltdown in the kingdom.

Macanjana Motsa, Swazi Government spokesperson, is reported in local media saying the marchers need the government's approval to march.

The Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) responded to this in a statement. 'As to why the Swazi people would bother to seek permission from a government that they are removing from power is something which requires explaining from the government spokesperson.'

Labour unions and students will try to march on the office of the prime minister today to deliver a petition. There are fears that the Swazi state forces will brutally attack the demonstration.<sup>181</sup>

Meanwhile, Wilson Ntshangase, the Minister of Education and Training told teachers they should not abandon classes and march, 'because it was illegal'.

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<sup>180</sup> <http://www.theroyalforums.com/9198-libyan-president-honors-king-of-swaziland-with-camels/>

<sup>181</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/police-plan-to-attack-protestors.html>

The *Swazi Observer* reported Ntshangase saying the ministry was not informed of the reasons the teachers were abandoning classes today.

‘The minister stated that it would be better if the teachers had at least written a letter just to inform them why they were not going to be in class,’ the newspaper reported.

### **King Fires Top Swazi Defence Man**

*19 March 2011*

John Kunene,<sup>182</sup> the top civil servant at the Ministry of Defence, has been fired because of the food crisis that has hit the Swazi Army.

Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of Swaziland, called a press conference at 10.20pm last night (18 March 2011) to announce a reshuffle of principle secretaries. The PSs were made to play a game of musical chairs and when the music stopped Kunene was the only one left standing without a chair. He will be replaced by Andreas Mathabela, from the Tikhundla Administration and Development.

The Canadian Press news agency reports today that Kunene was sacked because of the food crisis that has hit the Umbutfu Swaziland Defence Force (aka the army).

Food is in such short supply that soldiers are reportedly going from homestead to homestead in Swaziland begging for food. Shortages have occurred because the army has changed the way it procures food and supplies.

It is not clear whether at the heart of the problem is the government’s inability to pay its bills because of the present economic meltdown or the corruption that riddles the army.

Earlier in the day King Mswati III said the army’s ‘top brass’ would be ‘taken to task’ for the shortage. The King made the comment at an army passing-out ceremony.

According to a report in the *Swazi News*, an independent newspaper in the kingdom, he was ‘livid’ that he had not been told about the shortage. He had heard about it from the media, he said.

‘This shall be corrected immediately,’ he reportedly said to loud cheers from the soldiers.

And, by the end of the day Kunene was out on his ear.

It is not clear whether the king’s main concern was that he hadn’t been told, or that his soldiers were having to beg for food from ordinary Swazi people – six in ten live in abject poverty and three in ten are officially classed as under nourished.<sup>183</sup>

The sacking also came on the day that thousands of people marched on the office of the Prime Minister to demand that the government resign.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swaziland-arms-deal-is-still-on.html>

<sup>183</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/government-misleads-on-poverty.html>

<sup>184</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-pm-cabinet-must-go.html>

Yesterday's protest was the first of a number planned over the coming weeks and months. An 'uprising' coordinated through a Facebook site is planned for 12 April.

The King and the government he handpicked have been showing signs in recent weeks that they are worried that Swazi people have been encouraged by the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa and are prepared to fight for their own democratic rights.<sup>185</sup>

Obviously, if an uprising starts in Swaziland, King Mswati will want the army on his side. If he has allowed them to go hungry, they will think twice about whether he is worth supporting.

### ***Times Sunday Censors Itself on King*** *20 March 2011*

The *Times Sunday*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, has censored its own report on international media coverage of the mass protest on Friday (18 March 2011) that called on the government to resign.

It reported that the protest attracted journalists from all over the world, including the US, France, Germany and the UK. It then gave some examples of what the media said.

But – this is Swaziland after all – it censored the coverage. And, admitted it.

'Comments deemed insensitive have been edited,' the *Times Sunday* said.

Readers of this blog and the Internet generally will be very aware that the international media coverage has been highly critical of Swaziland's King Mswati III.

I doubt if there was a single report that didn't point out that the King was rich, while he's subjects lived in abject poverty.

Here are some extracts from reports the *Times Sunday* doesn't want the people of Swaziland to read.

*The impoverished kingdom is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to cut its wage bill if Swaziland is to qualify for much-needed international loans. King Mswati, Southern Africa's last absolute monarch, is criticised for his lavish spending on luxury cars and palaces for his 13 wives. – AFP news agency*

The austerity budget has galvanized an anti-monarchy movement in the southern African country of about 1 million led by King Mswati III. Some protesters on Friday carried signs saying: 'We want political reforms' and 'tyrants must fall.' – **Canadian Press**

*'Swaziland cannot remain an island of dictatorship in the sea of democracy,' Mario Masuku head of the banned opposition People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) told the crowd, reports the AP news agency. 'Royalty has squandered the economy... We want a government by the people,' he said. – BBC*

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<sup>185</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-mps-fear-uprising.html>

*Unemployment in the nation of 1.4 million people is about 40 percent, with 70 percent of the population living below the national poverty line. In contrast, King Mswati III -- who has 14 wives -- has a personal fortune of \$200 million, according to Forbes magazine. – Reuters news agency*

*Mswati has a personal fortune of \$200 million, New York's Forbes Magazine said on its website. The nation's gross domestic product was \$3 billion in 2009, according to the International Monetary Fund. He holds stakes in most major businesses, including a venture with Illovo Sugar Ltd., Africa's biggest producer of the sweetener, and Swaziland's only mobile phone services provider, the local unit of Johannesburg-based MTN Group Ltd. Mswati's allocation of 210 million emalangeni in this year's budget is nearly as much as the government spends on medicines, including anti-AIDS drugs. - Bloomberg agency report*

### **Protest Teachers Victimised at Work**

*21 March 2011*

Teachers who took part in Friday's mass protest to demand the resignation of the government are being victimised at their schools.<sup>186</sup>

This morning (21 March 2011) school principals were ordered to submit a list of absent staff members to the regional education office.

The move is being seen as an attempt to victimise those who went on the demonstration and also to intimidate teachers from taking any future action. A number of protests are planned in the coming weeks<sup>187</sup> and an 'uprising' on 12 April is being coordinated by a Facebook group.

Today's move was expected by teachers. On Saturday the Swaziland National Teachers Association (SNAT) Mbabane branch meeting heard that members were worried that they would be victimised for taking part in the march.

The meeting was told that some school principals took down the names of all the teachers who were absent on Friday to participate in the march and then forwarded them to the regional education office.

Muzi Mhlanga, SNAT Secretary-General, told the worried teachers that SNAT would engage the principals on the matter.

### **Army Food Shortage is State Secret**

*24 March 2011*

The Swaziland Government wants to keep secret from the Swazi people why the kingdom's army ran out of food and soldiers had to beg from civilians, homestead-to-homestead to stop from starving.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/bbc-report-on-swaziland-protest.html>

<sup>187</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swazi-kings-days-are-numbered.html>

<sup>188</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/top-swaziland-defence-man-fired.html>

The Government says the reason for the shortage is 'sensitive'. It says that the problem has now been solved.

In Swaziland, people generally assume that the problem was either caused because the government has no money to pay its bills and therefore can't get supplies, or that food purchases have fallen foul of the well-documented corruption that is rife in the army.<sup>189</sup>

The *Swazi Observer* reported that Lutfo Dlamini, the Minister of Defence and Security, told the Swazi Senate yesterday (23 March 2011), 'due to national security some of the details cannot be released to the public domain'.

Senators were not happy with the minister's reply. Victor Malambe said, 'Yes the food problem has been sorted in the army but we want to know what the source of the problem was.

'We know everyone is now shielding behind the economic crisis in the country but we have to know if it was negligence or the problem of the suppliers or government did not have the money. What is really happening, we should not provoke soldiers,' he said.

He's certainly right about not provoking soldiers. The King and the government he handpicks are running scared at the moment following a mass protest last Friday that demanded the resignation of the government. An 'uprising' coordinated by a Facebook group is planned for 12 April. With so much civil unrest about, the King needs to be sure the soldiers will support him if the time comes.

Last Friday, John Kunene, the Principal Secretary at the Ministry, was sacked by King Mswati III. Kunene was probably made the scapegoat for the affair.

The *Observer* reported that Dlamini would meet senators in private to explain the reason for the food shortage.

### **Minister Lutfo Lies to Senate over Arms Deal**

*28 March 2011*

A Swazi Cabinet minister lied to senators about an aborted US\$60 million (E429 million) weapons deal.

Lutfo Dlamini, the Minister of Defence, denied a Wikileaks report that Swaziland had tried to buy guns, ammunition, armed vehicles and helicopters from a company in the UK, but the deal had been blocked by the British Government because of fears the weapons would be used against the Swazi civilian population.

Both of the kingdom's daily newspapers, *The Times of Swaziland* and the *Swazi Observer*, report today (28 March 2011) that Dlamini categorically denied there was any weapons deal.

The *Times* reported, 'Dlamini said there was at no stage where the country spoke of purchasing guns.'

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<sup>189</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-army-not-loyal-to-king.html>

The *Swazi Observer* reported him saying, ‘We never bought any guns anywhere and never spent E429 million. The information leaked was misleading, it was written by someone who had his own agendas.’

But Dlamini was lying. The problem for Dlamini is that when the news broke in February John Kunene, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, the man who signed the contract, publicly confirmed the deal and said the Swazi Government had never given up trying to buy the weapons.<sup>190</sup>

It had been revealed by Wikileaks that the Swazi Government wanted to buy the weapons through an arms broker in the UK called Unionlet. The British Government refused to allow the deal to go through because it believed the weapons would be used by the Swazi Government to suppress its own people, or they would be sold on to another country, possibly Zimbabwe or Iran.

The *Swazi News* on 26 February 2011 quoted Kunene saying, ‘We have been in constant discussion with Unionlet in buying arms for peacekeeping exercises in other countries, and have never abandoned the idea.’

The Swaziland Government said the weapons were wanted as part of Swaziland’s peacekeeping obligations to the United Nations.

The UN would reimburse the money Swaziland spent on the weapons, which would be kept in the kingdom, Kunene said.

So Dlamini has told a whopping lie to senators. They should drag him back before them and squeeze the truth out of him.

But, Dlamini won’t talk to them. The *Times* reports, ‘Dlamini said the matter of firearms was bordered on state security and asked the media to stop reporting about matters which touched on state security.’

### **Riot Police ‘Train for Uprising’**

*28 March 2011*

A newspaper in Swaziland fears that fully-armed police are training to be ready for a civilian uprising.

The *Times Sunday* reported yesterday (27 March 2011) that members of Operational Support Service Unit (OSSU), the paramilitary police wing, are training to counter riots.

They are using methods similar to those of the army, the newspaper said.

The *Times Sunday* reported, ‘In other countries, when the army goes astray or plots to overthrow the government, the riot police squad is the one expected to contain the soldiers.’

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<sup>190</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swaziland-arms-deal-is-still-on.html>

The newspaper reminded its readers that a Facebook group is coordinating an ‘uprising’ to take place on 12 April 2011. The Swazi Government is taking the threat of the uprising seriously, it reported.

The *Times Sunday* said that in the past week fully-armed riot police were spotted training on public roads and in bushes.

‘This past week, vehicles had to give way to allow a battalion of police officers, armed with rifles, to march uniformly on one lane of Malindza-Mpaka road,’ it said.

‘Holding the rifles tight and taking instructions from a police trainer, their march covered a distance of about three kilometres. A truck ferried them to a start-up point, three kilometres away. The truck then returned to a spot near Malindza High School, which was their end point. They had to march from where they alighted from the truck to the spot near the high school.’

The newspaper said a local resident saw the riot police ‘rolling on the ground and sprinting towards the bushes’.

He added, ‘I saw them once training here but that was four years ago. Their facial expression sent a precise message that they were serious with the training. There was no shouting as they usually do when conducting trainings at their main base at Ngonini.’

The newspaper reported that the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) said people were intimidated by the manner in which the police were training.

Muzi Mhlanga, Secretary-General of SNAT, said holding rifles in public view would scare civilians.

He said the nation was not at war.

### **Why is there so Much Military Training?**

*29 March 2011*

For a kingdom, often described by King Mswati III and the sycophants who support him, as ‘peaceful’ there’s an awful lot of military training going on at present.

Last week it was announced that Swaziland and the Russian Ministry of Defence had signed a deal to train Swazi soldiers in Russia.

A press release from the Embassy of the Russian Federation to Mozambique said Russia would provide training in a number of military disciplines that include medicine, artillery and engineering.

This is the latest in a number of ‘deals’ Swaziland has done with foreign powers – most of them with dubious human rights records – to train military personnel.

In December 2010, it was revealed that Swazi military forces were to be sent to Pakistan for training.<sup>191</sup> The details of the training were not released, but in view of the ongoing civil strife in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, one could be forgiven for concluding that the training was in how to deal with an uprising of a civilian population.

Pakistan's military has an appalling record when it comes to attacking its own citizens. In the same week the Swaziland-Pakistan deal was announced Wikileaks revealed the United States was concerned about massive human right violations in Pakistan, especially where suspected 'terrorists' were concerned.

As we know King Mswati and Barnabas Dlamini, the man he unconstitutionally-appointed Prime Minister, label anyone who opposes them 'terrorists'.

The deal was made at about the same time that Wikileaks also revealed that a weapons deal worth US\$60 million had been blocked by the UK Government amid fears that the Swaziland King would use the guns, troop carriers and helicopters against the Swazi people.<sup>192</sup>

Pakistan is not the only country that has helped to train military personnel for the King. The King's eldest son Prince Sicalo was undergoing several years training as a military pilot in Libya when the present rebellion started. As soon as trouble began Sicalo ran away home to his father's arms.<sup>193</sup>

Sicalo's brother Prince Lindani has also undergone military training abroad. In his case he went to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where he passed out as an officer cadet in August 2010.

So, all that amounts to a lot of military training, But what is it all for? Swaziland is not about to declare war on another state and it is highly unlikely it's about to be invaded. King Mswati should tell us what's going on.

Otherwise, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the military are being trained to keep the King in power should an uprising start.

### **School Chains Down Girls and Flogs Them Bare**

*30 March 2011*

Girls at a Swaziland school are being flogged by teachers on their bare flesh and if they resist they are chained down so the beating can continue.

They say they get up to 40 strokes at a time.

In protest, 300 school pupils at Mpofo High School, boycotted classes.

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<sup>191</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/despots-to-train-swazi-army.html>

<sup>192</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swazi-secret-arms-deal-for-iran.html>

<sup>193</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swazi-prince-runs-away-from-libya.html>

The *Swazi Observer* reported the children said ‘that when they are beaten, they are made to strip naked on the lower body so that the teachers can beat them on bare flesh’.

One girl told the newspaper, ‘The teachers make us lie on a bench whereby if you are a girl you lift your skirt so that they can beat you on bare flesh, if you resist you are chained to the bench.’

The pupils said they had had enough of being abused in the name of corporal punishment and other issues affecting them in the school.

Deputy Principal Enock Dlamini told the *Observer*, ‘We only administer the lawful six strokes but the only difference is that we use a pipe [instead of the regulation cane] which we believe is safer.’

A reporter from the *Observer* visited the school and found five police officers seated next to one of the classrooms while the school gate was locked as pupils walked aimlessly inside and outside the school premises.

Instead of sitting on their backsides, the police should go in and arrest the teachers for assault.

This is far from an isolated incident in schools in Swaziland where children are regularly tortured by their teachers in the name of punishment.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/ban-beating-of-children-now.html>

## 6. April

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### **Government Bans State radio From Reporting Protest**

*11 April 2011*

Swaziland's state radio SBIS was banned by the Swazi Government from reporting the mass protest march in the kingdom on 18 March 2011.

About 8,000 people marched on the office of the Prime Minister to demand the resignation of the entire government.

Yesterday (1 April 2011), at a meeting between editors and Barnabas Dlamini, the Prime Minister, SBIS news editor Welile Dlamini said he had been forced to go from pillar to post asking for permission to cover the march, but did not get it.

The *Swazi News*, an independent newspaper in Swaziland, reported him saying, 'The march happened right under our noses and we were told never to say anything about it. This does not augur well for a country that professes to support freedom of the media. It has come to a point that at SBIS we are now informed what to publish and what not.

'There is a danger that the people will eventually lose interest in the station and one day government will desire that a certain issue is broadcast but very few listeners will take note of it,' he said.

Barnabas Dlamini told editors journalists had to abide by the policy of the station.

In what many would see as a not-so-veiled threat, the PM told Welile Dlamini it was not uncommon that editors resigned from media companies if they felt that their convictions were against those of the media company.

Bheki Makhubu, Editor of the *Nation*, an anti-government monthly magazine, asked the PM if government was in the habit of pretending that things were not happening when in fact they were happening.

This is not the first example of blatant censorship at SBIS. Last month (March 2011), it stopped broadcasting the BBC World Service Focus on Africa programme after it carried reports critical of King Mswati III.<sup>195</sup>

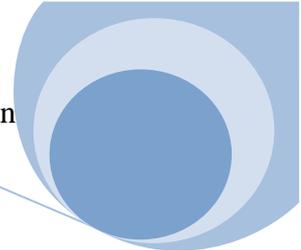
In the same month, SBIS failed to cover the march by nurses that forced the Swazi Government into paying them overdue allowances.<sup>196</sup>

SBIS is not expected to report on the next major protest in Swaziland. An 'uprising' coordinated by a Facebook group is due to take place on 12 April.

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<sup>195</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/misa-blasts-swazi-bbc-censorship.html>

<sup>196</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/now-nurses-are-also-censored.html>



## PM Ducks the Lutfo Question

4 April 2011

Swaziland's Prime Minister twisted and turned and refused to answer when he was questioned by editors about the antics of Lutfo Dlamini<sup>197</sup>, the Swazi Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Lutfo returned to work after many weeks absence after it was revealed internationally (but not by the media in Swaziland) that he had been sacked for his part in a corruption scandal involving millions of dollars that was sent from the Kuwaiti Royal Family to King Mswati III.<sup>198</sup>

The money never arrived.

Lutfo and the Swaziland Ambassador to Kuwait, Pshesheya Dlamini, were hauled before Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini and sacked.

But after ructions within the Swazi Royal Family – the king wanted them out,<sup>199</sup> but other factions including the Queen Mother wanted Lutfo to be spared – both men returned to work.

Barnabas Dlamini claimed to the editors at a regular meeting on Friday (1 April 2011) that Lutfo had been on sick leave<sup>200</sup> and that Pshesheya had been on three months holiday<sup>201</sup> (nice work if you can get it!).

But, Barnabas Dlamini refused to be questioned on the matter by the editors.

The Swaziland Cabinet 'is anchored on certain pillars, one of which is secrecy', the *Weekend Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati, reported him saying.

So what's so secret about a cabinet minister on lengthy sick leave and an ambassador on a long holiday?

The newspaper knows the answer to that<sup>202</sup> as do readers of this blog, but the people of Swaziland will not be told through their local media.

Prime Minister Dlamini summed it up nicely, 'There are secret matters no matter how transparent one may become. But I can assure the nation that nothing went amiss there. There are, however, some things you can't discuss publicly.'

Yes, that just about sums up Swaziland under King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch: there are things you can't discuss publicly.

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<sup>197</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/minister-lutfo-lies-to-senate.html>

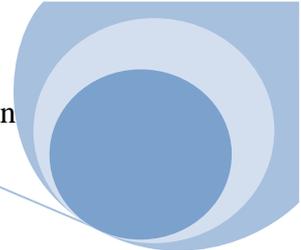
<sup>198</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/swazi-pm-come-clean-about-lutfo.html>

<sup>199</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-king-ordered-lutfo-sacking.html>

<sup>200</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/lutfo-too-sick-to-work.html>

<sup>201</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/ambassador-hardly-ever-at-work.html>

<sup>202</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/lutfo-swazi-media-talk-in-riddles.html>



## **What a Laugh! Lutfo to ‘Rebuild’ Swaziland’s Image**

*5 April 2011*

The Swaziland Government is scraping the bottom of the barrel by sending Lutfo Dlamini to South Africa to rebuild the kingdom’s dented image.

The *Swazi Observer* reported today (5 April 2011) that Dlamini, the Swazi Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, would meet his South African counterpart.

The *Observer* reports, ‘Dlamini will also meet the media, where he is expected to give responses to questions relating to Swaziland.’

It doesn’t say what those ‘questions’ are, but we can suppose the ‘uprising’ in Swaziland due to start next Tuesday (12 April 2011) will be high on the list.

I laughed out loud when I read they were sending Lutfo Dlamini to rebuild Swaziland’s image. There couldn’t be a more inappropriate person. He is at the centre of a corruption scandal involving millions of dollars stolen from the Kuwaiti Royal Family that he was entrusted to send to King Mswati III.

He is an inveterate liar who is consistently found out. But he has no shame and he just carries on lying as if nothing was the matter.

Then there is his own sexual morality which is constantly discussed in diplomatic circles and in bars the length and breadth of Swaziland. I won’t detail them in deference to the more squeamish readers, but just think ‘barnyard’ and you’ll get the picture.

Of course, if King Mswati wants to rebuild the kingdom’s dented image, he could stop milking his subjects for all they are worth.<sup>203</sup> He took a 23 percent increase in his income from the Swazi taxpayer this year, while most government departments were forced to cut budgets by 20 percent.<sup>204</sup> The King who has a personal wealth estimated by Forbes in 2009 to be US\$200 million<sup>205</sup> also takes money from a raft of Swaziland’s mineral and financial assets.

He could also face the truth: his subjects don’t love him. They put up with him because they have to. It’s mostly fear that has stopped them telling him and the spongers who surround him that their time is up.

## **Swazi Government Abuses Diplomats**

*7 April 2011*

The Swaziland Government must be cracking up. Yesterday it brought more than 30 diplomats to the Foreign Ministry and roundly abused them.

Leading the attack was cabinet minister Ntuthuko Dlamini.<sup>206</sup>

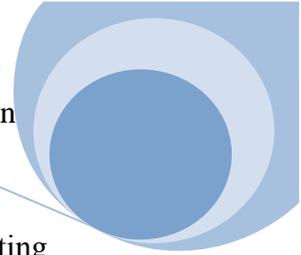
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<sup>203</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/rage-at-swazi-kings-lashing-living.html>

<sup>204</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/king-gets-more-his-subjects-less.html>

<sup>205</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/07/swaziland-king-keeps-coining-it-in.html>

<sup>206</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/08/is-swazi-king-to-get-private-jet.html>



He accused the diplomats, who are based in either Swaziland or Mozambique, of plotting with others to overthrow the government.

In what the *Times of Swaziland* today (7 April 2011) described as a ‘tirade’, Dlamini accused the present ambassadors, high commissioners and other diplomats, of ‘taking advantage of “small” and “poor” Swaziland by capitalising on her small mistakes’.

He accused the diplomats of meeting with prodemocracy campaigners and members of organisations the Swazi government, handpicked by King Mswati III, have declared terrorist.

The *Times* reported him saying, ‘We say people should disassociate themselves from the banned political parties or whatever you call them. Then we find some of you, Your Excellencies, sitting and having dinner with these people. You cannot be seen to be with my enemy and still think I appreciate your presence and anything that you do. It is naturally wrong.’

Dlamini made specific reference to the mass protest on 18 March 2011 that called for the resignation of the entire government.

The *Times* quoted him saying, ‘When you come to Swaziland and there are people delivering a petition, that is taken all over the world and it is called an uprising. This is meant to change people’s minds by saying bad things about the country.’

Dlamini went on to tell the envoys that their beliefs and way of doing things are not good for Swaziland.

Ntuthuko Dlamini, like his near namesake Lutfo Dlamini,<sup>207</sup> is also incapable of not lying about conditions in Swaziland.

In a bizarre outburst he told the diplomats about ‘some countries where anyone caught wearing a T-shirt bearing the image of Osama Bin Laden would be taken to task. He said here in Swaziland, anyone wearing the same T-shirt would not be bothered’.

Of course, what he didn’t say – and nor did any of the Swazi media correct him – is that in Swaziland as in the case of Siphoshe Jele<sup>208</sup> in May 2010 you can be arrested for wearing a T-shirt with a PUDEMO slogan and end up dead three days later hanging from the ceiling in a washroom of a government correctional facility.

Ntuthuko Dlamini, who clearly needs a few lessons in diplomacy himself, then told the diplomats that Swaziland needed their support, ‘but it will not be dictated to’.

He said if the envoys and the countries they represent have money, they should give it to Swaziland.

Lutfo Dlamini then gave a presentation on Swaziland’s economic woes and begged the diplomats for financial aid to get the economy out of its mess.

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<sup>207</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/sa-press-see-through-lutfo-lies.html>

<sup>208</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/levitating-jele-killed-himself.html>

‘Donor budget support would go a long way in helping the kingdom’s ailing economy,’ he told them.

He said Swaziland currently gets about four percent of its budget from donors and he hoped the donor budget support could be increased.

The *Swazi Observer* reported that the diplomats were given a chance to speak at the end, but only one chose to do so.

And who can blame them? If this were a football match we’d call it an own goal scored by the Swazi Government.

### **King Mswati to Attend British Royal Wedding**

*16 April 2011*

King Mswati III is to attend the British Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton.

At the end of a week that saw King Mswati’s state forces brutally suppress legitimate protests in his kingdom, the BBC TV programme in the UK **Newsnight** revealed yesterday (15 April 2011) that the King and an entourage of 15 people will be in London for the wedding.

The news – not confirmed by the British Royal Family – has already provoked anger among democracy campaigners.

Thobile Gwebu, coordinator of the Swaziland Vigil UK, told **Newsnight** ‘It will show that the British monarchy is supportive of what King Mswati is doing, because they are allowing him to come to the Royal Wedding, even though people back home are demonstrating they’re not happy about the situation back home.’ She said people were demonstrating about the political and economic situation.

This week King Mswati was criticised by a wide range of governments, human rights groups, trade unions and others for the brutal way his police and troops repressed a protest on Tuesday (12 April 2011). Union and student leaders have been arrested and charged with terrorism offences.

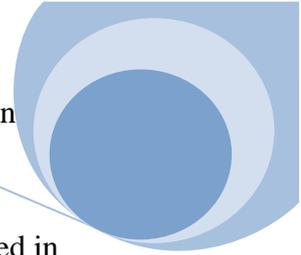
**Newsnight** reported that King Mswati will leave Swaziland on 26 April to attend the wedding on 29 April. He will stay at the Dorchester hotel, London, at a cost of £450 (E5,000 a night).

### **Student Leaders are Political Prisoners**

*18 April 2011*

Statement: Africa Contact, Denmark.

Africa Contact calls for the unconditional release of student leader Maxwell Dlamini. The charges against him are ludicrous and any confession he might have made has been tortured out of him.



Maxwell Dlamini, the President of the Swaziland National Union of Students, appeared in court in Manzini, Swaziland, on April 15 on charges of being in possession of explosives, and thus contravening Sections 8 and 9 of Swaziland's Explosives Act 4 of 1961. He has been charged together with member of PUDEMO's youth wing, SWAYOCO, Musa Ngubeni.

The explosives that the police claim Maxwell was in possession of were allegedly to have been used during the peaceful mass demonstrations for multi-party democracy and socio-economic justice between April 12 and April 14 that were brutally crushed by Swazi police and security forces.

Before his court appearance, Maxwell Dlamini and his lawyer have experienced the Swazi regimes idea of justice. Maxwell has been tortured and forced to write and sign a report that was dictated to him about his actions between the 8th and 13th of April, where he was first detained but later released, according to the Swaziland Solidarity Network.

Maxwell's Mbabane-based lawyer, Mandla Mkhwanazi, had been given unclear and contradictory information about in which court he was to appear at his client's important first court appearance. He had wished to apply for bail, but was not able to do so because he had rushed back and forth between Swaziland's High Court and Manzini's Magistrates court and therefore arrived too late for the session. The unclear information given him was almost certainly given to deliberately impede his work.

Many Swazi's, and foreigners who are familiar with the blatant disregard for the rule of law in Swaziland, believe that the charges against Maxwell Dlamini are ridiculous - not least because Maxwell has consistently advocated a peaceful campaign for democracy in Swaziland.

Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary General of the Swaziland Federation of Labour, for one has called the charges "unconvincing" and claims that the arrests are an attempt to "cover up for the heavy-handedness the police applied against innocent citizens" during the mass protests between April 12 and April 14.

Other similar politically motivated cases have also shown that the charges against Maxwell Dlamini are in all probability fabricated. One of the more prominent and well-documented political cases in Swaziland was against PUDEMO President Mario Masuku in 2009. Mario Masuku was imprisoned for 340 days awaiting trial on charges of terrorism, but when he was finally brought before a judge, the case was laughed out of court in a matter of hours.

Africa Contact therefore urges all government's, Embassies in Swaziland, and Human Rights and other organisations to:

- a) Call for the unconditional release of Maxwell Dlamini, whom we regard as a political prisoner.
- b) If the call for Maxwell's release is not heeded, demand a free and fair trial for Maxwell Dlamini and an investigation into the allegations of torture of Maxwell Dlamini by Swazi officers, with subsequent charges brought against anyone found guilty of having taken part in such actions.

Africa Contact also demands that the Swazi government refrains from any further mistreatment or threats against members of Swaziland democratic movement or members of the Swazi public in general. The Swazi government has, both during the past week especially, but also for many years prior to this, kept the people of Swaziland in a constant state of fear through a deliberate campaign of terror, violence and intimidation.

No trial can be truly fair and free under such a regime of terror, however, which is why Africa Contact also calls for a swift and inclusive process of democratisation that also ensures economic redistribution and socio-economic justice for all Swazis. Such a process must also replace the present tyrannical, absolute monarchy with a multi-party democracy that truly empowers and includes all of Swaziland's citizens in the process of running the country, observes the rule of law and upholds human rights.

### **No Money for AIDS, but the King's OK**

*20 April 2011*

While AIDS groups are forced to close because their funds have been cut, money is flowing at an increasing rate to King Mswati III and his royal family.

News emerged yesterday (19 April 2011) that groups set up to help Swaziland people with HIV and AID are about to close because they are no longer getting financial support, even though Swaziland's HIV rate of 26.1 percent is the highest in the world.

A report from IRIN<sup>209</sup> said that one AIDS group, the Swaziland AIDS Support Organisation (SASO), was about to close due to lack of funds. The report said 600,000 people in a population in Swaziland of roughly one million had benefited from community outreach programmes run by SASO, or support organizations SASO had helped organize.

SASO is about to grind to a halt. Previous financial benefactors, including the Swazi Government, have had to cut back or eliminate their assistance in the wake of economic meltdown in Swaziland.

Last week, the Swaziland National Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (SWANNEPHA), the umbrella body with which SASO works closely, announced at a press conference that it was also facing imminent closure if new sources of funding were not found.

SWANNEPHA receives its funding from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, via Swaziland's National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA). SWANNEPHA had its budget reduced from US\$130,000 (E882,000) in 2008 to \$100,000 in 2009.

But, while money cannot be found to keep the HIV AIDS support groups going, the same cannot be said about money for King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch. In February this year (2011) the budget for King Mswati and the royal household was raised by E40 million (US\$5.88 million) for the coming year. By comparison the US\$130,000 for SWANNEPHA is a drop in the ocean.

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<sup>209</sup> <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=92526>

But it doesn't end there. This is for the second consecutive year that the budget for King Mswati's Royal Family increased - in the 2010/11 financial year, the royal budget went from E130 million to E170 million.

The greed of King Mswati and the royal family seems to know no bounds. The *Nation* magazine reported this month (April 2011) that the King's office spent about E13 million (US\$1.8 million) on internal decor for three of the royal guest houses.<sup>210</sup>

The decor include furniture, curtains, carpet, wood floor and cladding, bathrooms, artwork and accessories, sound system, multimedia system, TV, phones and water meters. On top of this, E125 million a year is regularly allocated for the rehabilitation, maintenance and construction of state houses. And E25 million is available for link roads to royal residences.

Yesterday was the King's 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday and next week is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his victory in a power struggle within Swaziland that saw him crowned king.

You might therefore be pleased to know that the budget for the Celebrations Office is E12.5 million – roughly 14 times the annual budget of SWANNEPHA.

### **Police Will Kill Terror Suspect, Court Told**

*23 April 2011*

Community police will murder terror suspect Musa Ngubeni if he is allowed out on bail, a Swaziland magistrate court was told.

According to a report in the *Swazi News*, Kwaluseni community leader Indvuna Musa Dlamini said, 'the Kwaluseni community was not pleased with the serious offence he committed'. The paper quoted Indvuna Dlamini saying, 'People are talking and if he would set foot in the community, the community police would kill him together with the people who are angry.'

Indvuna Dlamini was in court to speak about Ngubeni's character and to oppose his bail. But, in an astonishing turn of events, he told the court that he didn't actually know Ngubeni, but he did know his father well.

Despite Indvuna Dlamini's ignorance, the court decided to side with him and denied bail.

If the *Swazi News* report is anything to go by, no one questioned why the court chose to rely on Indvuna Dlamini's testimony even though he openly admitted he didn't know Ngubeni.

Ngubeni, an activist with the banned Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) was in court along with Maxwell Dlamini, president of the Swaziland National Union of Students.

They are charged under the Explosives Act 1961 with possessing explosives.

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<sup>210</sup> <http://www.theswazination.com/Cover-Story-King-Mswati-III-gets-E40m-more.html>

There were about 50 supporters at the court hearing on Thursday (21 April 2011). They reacted noisily when they heard that the police would murder Ngubeni. Senior Magistrate Msibi threatened to put them in jail if they didn't shut up.

If the *Swazi News* account of the case is to be trusted, she made no comment about the murder threat.

The bail hearing was adjourned until Tuesday.

Although the two men have yet to stand trial, the *Swazi News* has already decided that they are guilty. Twice in its report it said the pair 'committed' the offence. The *Times of Swaziland* newspaper group should issue a correction and apology in the next available issue. It should, but I'm not holding my breath.

### **Revealed: Why King Mswati Got Royal Wedding Invitation**

*24 April 2011*

King Mswati III, the despot of Swaziland, the tiny kingdom that relies on neighbouring South Africa for its economic and political existence, has been invited to next week's British Royal Wedding.

Mswati, who is king to a tiny kingdom populated with about 1 million people (roughly one-seventh of the number who live in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area), will take 50 people with him to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. He will stay at the Dorchester Hotel in London, where a room costs £450 (E5,000) a night.

So, why has he, a tin pot dictator from a land hardly anybody in Britain has heard of, been invited?

The answer is that King Mswati personally hasn't been invited, the monarch of Swaziland has. The British Royal Family are nothing if not snobs and they will invite only a certain 'class' of person to their weddings.

Heads of state who are not royals are just too common. Hence Barack Obama, president of the United States, has to watch the show on his television.

King Mswati makes the cut because all heads of state of Commonwealth countries who are Royals are invited.

I don't for one moment think William or Kate have the slightest idea who King Mswati is, nor can they find Swaziland on the map. And they don't know (or care?) that King Mswati and his state forces brutally attacked prodemocracy campaigners last week and will do it again and again in the future if they are allowed to get away with it. He is simply 'one of us' so he must come to the wedding.

In Swaziland, the media have not yet reported that King Mswati is heading off to London. The rule in the kingdom is that they do not report on the King unless the King allows them to. Until an official announcement about the trip is made by the King's Office, it doesn't exist.

When the Swazi media do eventually get permission to tell King Mswati's subjects he is off to London, they won't report on the entourage of 50 who will go with him, nor will they mention the huge cost of the trip the poverty-stricken Swazis will have to pay for.

They are likely to say it is a great honour for King Mswati to be chosen and it shows the respect in which he is held on the international stage.

It won't be true. The British Royal Family don't know or care who King Mswati is but as long as he is a Royal he gets a ticket to the wedding.

Think of it this way: if the King of Swaziland was a goat, that goat would be on its way to London for the wedding.

### **Worldwide Interest in Anti-Mswati Protest**

*27 April 2011*

There was worldwide interest in the demonstration last night (26 April 2011) outside the Dorchester Hotel in London to protest at the invitation of King Mswati III of Swaziland to the British Royal Wedding.

Among the journalists present were two BBC reporters, two journalists from France (*Le Monde* and a national radio station), a freelance reporter for South Africa's *Sunday Times*, a US reporter, a couple of freelance camera crews (one making a documentary), Eyewitness News and a couple of other journalists who weren't identified.

### **Pressure to Disinvite Swazi King from Royal Wedding**

*28 April 2011*

Pressure is mounting for the UK Government to withdraw Swaziland King Mswati III's invitation to the Royal Wedding.

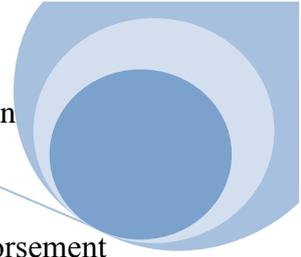
It follows the decision today (28 April 2011) to 'disinvite' Sami Khiyami, the Syrian ambassador, because of his country's appalling human rights record.

Today, a vigil was taking place outside the Saudi Arabia's embassy in London to protest against Saudi Prince Mohamed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz's invitation to the wedding in the light of the Saudi military intervention in the neighbouring Gulf state. Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman al Khalifa has already pulled out of the wedding.

The protesters also want King Mswati's invitation withdrawn.

Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, who is joining the demonstration, is reported by the *Financial Times*, UK, saying it is deplorable that the Queen has invited representatives from 'dictatorships', including Swaziland.

He said, 'The guest list displays a shocking insensitivity to the suffering of people who have been persecuted by these royal despots. It is an insult to the victims of dictatorship for our royal family to welcome and embrace these oppressors.'



The BBC quoted the UK Foreign Office as saying, ‘An invitation does not mean endorsement or approval of the behaviour of any government, simply that we have normal diplomatic relations with that country.’

The Left Foot Forward website responded saying there were ‘still people on the [wedding] list that the Foreign Office should not wish to enjoy “normal relations” with, such as the King of Swaziland. King Mswati III [who] is the last absolute monarch in Africa, in a country where:

‘Political parties are banned, trade unions are massively restricted and the country scores lower than Zimbabwe for its political rights.’

The anti-monarchy campaign group Republic also criticised King Mswati’s invitation. Republic chief Graham Smith said, ‘This guest list reads like a *Who’s Who* of tyrants and their cronies’.

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) has already called for King Mswati’s invitation to be reconsidered ‘and preferably revoked’.

It said, ‘At the very least the British government should speak out about the worsening situation in Swaziland and express concern to the highest levels of its government.’

### **King Mswati has no Shame**

*28 April 2011*

When King Mswati III of Swaziland did a runner from the Dorchester Hotel, London, because he didn’t want to hear the prodemocracy demonstrators outside his window, he didn’t exactly have to sleep on the streets.

Instead, he moved a little further down Park Lane into the Four Seasons Hotel.

There he has set up his stall for the duration of his stay in London, where he is one of 1,900 ‘close friends’ of William and Kate at the British Royal Wedding.

King Mswati is widely reported to have flown to London with an entourage of 50 people.

The Four Seasons isn’t a budget Motel 6. Here are the room prices. Please note that these are the prices per night, not per year.

Seven in ten of King Mswati’s subjects are so poor they live on less than US\$2 a day; three in ten are so hungry they are medically diagnosed as malnourished and Swaziland has the highest rate of HIV infection in the world.

Swaziland is experiencing an economic meltdown back home where unemployment is about 40 percent and government budgets have been cut by 20 percent for the coming year. At the same time the budget for King Mswati has risen by 23 per cent this year.

The IMF is calling for severe economic measures in Swaziland before it backs a loan for US\$100 million from the African Development Bank. About 7,000 public servants are expected to lose their jobs as a result.

The King was estimated by Forbes in 2009 to have a personal fortune of US\$200 million.

So, here's the price list for the Four Seasons.<sup>211</sup> Don't think King Mswati personally will pick up the tab: it'll be the poor people of Swaziland who pay for him ... as they always have to.

*Exchange rate: £100 = E1,110 = US\$165*

Standard Room £495.00  
Superior Room £510.00  
Deluxe Room £610.00  
Premier Room £625.00  
Conservatories £925.00  
Executive Conservatory Suite £1,100.00  
Westminster Suite £1,200.00  
Mayfair Suite £1,400.00  
Ambassador Suite £1,700.00  
Deluxe One-Bedroom Suite £2,600.00  
Park Suite £3,000.00  
Executive One-Bedroom Suite £3,000.00  
Grand One-Bedroom Suite £4,500.00  
Garden Suite £5,000.00  
The Blue £6,000.00  
Presidential Suite £8,750.00

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<sup>211</sup> [http://www.fourseasons.com/london/compare\\_rooms/](http://www.fourseasons.com/london/compare_rooms/)

## 7. May

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### **Kwaluseni Police ‘are Criminals’**

2 May 2011

The community police force that threatened to murder<sup>212</sup> democracy activist Musa Ngubeni if he was released on bail pending trial on explosive offences have been accused of a number of criminal activities.

The *Weekend Observer* newspaper reported that instead of protecting the, members of Kwaluseni community police have been involved in criminal activities, in an area known for its high crime rate.

Some community police officers were recently discovered to be involved in cattle rustling, whilst others were found with stolen exhibits confiscated from thugs in the area.

They were entrusted with the responsibility of taking the exhibits to the police station, but they instead kept some for personal use, a resident told the newspaper.

In a third instance, another community policeman defrauded a resident of an undisclosed sum of money using the name of a police officer from Sigodvweni.

The *Observer* reported, ‘The unruly behaviour of community police was reported to uniformed police officers at Sigodvweni Police Station. Overseer of the community policing concept at Kwaluseni Mthunzi Dlamini confirmed the reigning doubt and questions over the credibility of community police following the incidences where they were found to have engaged in criminal behavior. Dlamini said authorities of Kwaluseni, including the chiefdom’s inner council as well as the community were disappointed by the latest behavior of community police.’

### **Lutfo Lies About Media Support**

6 May 2011

Swaziland cabinet minister Lutfo Dlamini<sup>213</sup> is talking nonsense when he claims that he has won over the media in England and they now no longer have ‘negative perception’ about the kingdom.

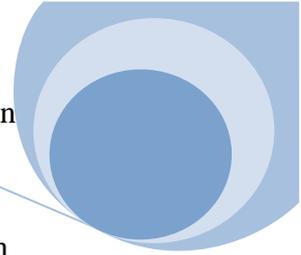
The *Times of Swaziland* today (6 May 2011) quotes Dlamini saying that when he was in England last week with King Mswati III for the British Royal Wedding, he won the ‘battle’ with journalists there to dispel their negative perceptions of Swaziland ‘hands down’.

What he says is just not true. There has not been a single report in the British newspapers, radio or television that supports King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, or the undemocratic regime he controls. Not one. This was the case before the wedding, during the wedding and since the wedding.

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<sup>212</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/police-will-kill-terror-suspect.html>

<sup>213</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/no-media-freedom-in-swaziland.html>



Most of the reports reveal that King Mswati is a selfish despot who spends lavishly on himself and his family while seven in ten of his subjects live in abject poverty. These are not 'negative perceptions' as Dlamini likes to call them; they are facts.

The UK media are not alone in telling their audiences the truth about Swaziland. The same message is repeated right the way across the globe. Just about the only media you'll find that supports the King are the media in Swaziland.

So, not for the first time, Lutfo Dlamini has been caught out lying to the Swazi people. He is a compulsive liar and we should not believe a word he says.

Unless, of course, he actually believes what he says: in which case he is delusional.

### **Did Swazi PM Lie on Corruption?**

*8 May 2011*

So, where is the high profile corruption trial the Swaziland Prime Minister promised us would take place in April?

That's April 2011: Not April some year never.

In February Barnabas Dlamini was embroiled in a personal corruption scandal involving his purchase of government land at hugely discounted rates.<sup>214</sup>

Dlamini and many of his fellow cabinet members – all handpicked by King Mswati III – were reeling from disclosures about their personal dishonesty and the way they had been able to in effect steal land from the Swazi people.

Then to deflect attention away from himself, Dlamini, who was appointed PM by King Mswati in contravention of the Swazi Constitution, announced a high profile corruption trial was on the way.

Unsurprisingly, to anyone who follows events in Swaziland, the local media reported what he said uncritically.

Dlamini was allowed to get away with the claim 'that a high profile corruption case will be in the High Court in April'.

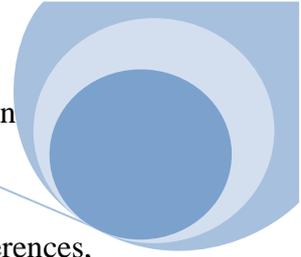
The *Times of Swaziland* reported on 15 February 2011, 'Even though the premier did not elaborate on this, he said government was committed to the fight against corruption.'

He said, 'I hear that in April a big case will commence at the High Court.'

The newspaper reported him saying, 'Sinabo shaca (we will leave no stone unturned),' he said in reference to corrupt individuals adding 'lonyaka bato setjentwa (in 2011 we will deal with them severely).'

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<sup>214</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/are-swazi-pms-days-numbered.html>



Dlamini, who has a reputation for delivering highly-charged statements at press conferences, went on to claim that his government would ‘not be deterred by the plots to frustrate the investigations’ into corruption activities in the kingdom.

‘We expect very soon to see some of the most substantial cases under investigation coming to the High Court,’ he said.

He said the corrupt individuals would see government’s resolve.

So, here we are in the second week of May 2011: April has come and gone and no corruption case is being heard.

Dlamini should make a public statement immediately to tell the Swazi people the names of the accused and when the court case will be heard.

Otherwise, we shall be forced to conclude that he was telling lies.

### **Swazi PM Not Honest on Corruption**

*12 May 2011*

Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini wasn’t being honest with the Swazi people when he promised a ‘high profile’ corruption case would be in court in April.

April came and went and, as I reported on Sunday (8 May 2011), no court case was forthcoming. I suggested his statement was a smokescreen to divert attention away from allegations about the Prime Minister’s own corrupt activities.

The *Times of Swaziland* followed up my report and was told by the Prime Minister’s office that the case in question involved Industrial Court Judge Sifiso Nsibande and three others who are implicated in an alleged E13 million fraud.

The problem with the PM’s answer is that the case had already started in court before Dlamini made his statement in February 2011

This means it wasn’t a new case and couldn’t be seen as evidence of a crackdown on corruption as promised by the Prime Minister.

So, if Dlamini wasn’t telling a bare-faced lie, he was at least severely misleading the people.

### **King’s Airport: More Nonsense Claims**

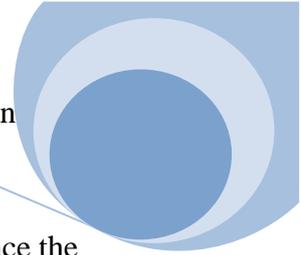
*15 May 2011*

Sabelo Dlamini,<sup>215</sup> Swaziland Civil Aviation Authority (SWACAA) Marketing and Corporate Affairs Director, is trying to talk up Sikhuphe International Airport<sup>216</sup> again.

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<sup>215</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/swazi-kings-sikhuphe-humiliation.html>

<sup>216</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/02/sikhuphe-airport-is-too-small.html>



And not for the first time he is beginning to sound a bit desperate as he tries to convince the Swazi public, who are having to foot the estimated US\$1 billion<sup>217</sup> the airport is predicted to have cost by the time all the bills are in, that it has a viable future.

There was no needs analysis undertaken before building of the airport started and Sikhuphe is now internationally recognised as nothing more than a vanity project for King Mswati III.

Dlamini, has been in Cape Town trying to sell the idea of Sikhuphe as a tourism destination. He was interviewed by the *Weekend Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati.

The newspaper yesterday (14 May 2011) uncritically reported Dlamini's assertion that interest is being shown by major airlines and tour operators across the world.

'We have established possible routes which we want to market to the operators. Some of the proposed routes from Sikhuphe are Durban, Cape Town, Lanseria Airport in Sandton, Harare and Mozambique,' the *Observer* reported Dlamini saying.

But, each of these airports is on Swaziland's doorstep. If these new routes were needed and were commercially viable they could easily operate in and out of Swaziland's existing airport at Matsapha. There is no need to waste US\$1 billion building a new airport.

And, most of these airports have their own connections to major international cities so there's no need for passengers to first fly to Sikhuphe and then take a connecting plane.

The *Observer* also reports Dlamini saying he met with 'at least five big airline operators'. The newspaper only names three of them. They are, according to the paper:

**Knysna Tour Operators** - which actually doesn't exist. Perhaps the newspaper meant 'Knysna' which is a town of about 76,000 people in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Why would you fly from Sikhuphe to the Western Cape? It's easier to drive or take a bus. **Knysna Tour Operators is described on the Internet as providing** 'custom tours and guided tours in the Knysna area and beyond'.<sup>218</sup> No offence guys, but that doesn't make you a 'big airline operator'.

**Timeless Ethiopia**<sup>219</sup> is the second outfit named by the *Observer*. It offers tours within Ethiopia, so won't be sending anyone to Swaziland. I doubt that many people will want to travel from Sikhuphe to Ethiopia for a local tour with this company, so it won't make a dent in that US\$1 billion.

**Satoa Tours**<sup>220</sup> is the third company. It specialises in tours of southern Africa and the Indian Ocean and already operates in Swaziland – which is just as well as it shares the address of the Swaziland High Commission at 20 Buckingham Gate, London, UK.

At some point Sabelo Dlamini and the Swazi Government have got to start telling us the truth about Sikhuphe. It's a dead duck. Nobody wants it. It's a waste of money.

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<sup>217</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/sikhuphe-cost-soars-to-1bn.html>

<sup>218</sup> <http://showme.co.za/knysna/tourism/travel-services/tour-operators/>

<sup>219</sup> <http://www.timelessethiopia.com/whyus.html>

<sup>220</sup> <http://www.satoa.co.uk/>

## 8. June

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### **Ban on Jail Visits after TV Probe**

*3 June 2011*

Prison visits to Maxwell Dlamini and Musa Ngubeni, two Swazi political prisoners, have been stopped after a South African television crew sneaked into jail and interviewed them.<sup>221</sup>

The Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) reports that yesterday (2 June 2011) was the last time the pair would be allowed visits. The previous night SABC3, a television station in South Africa, had broadcast a programme that included interviews with Dlamini and Ngubeni, who are on remand on explosives charges arising out of the protests held on 12 and 13 April.

SABC3 sneaked cameras into jail and interviewed them while a warden sat nearby unaware that anything was happening.

SSN reports the banning order was relayed to warders by the Head Warden at the Zakhele Remand Centre in Manzini. He told visitors that yesterday would be the last day that they were allowing visits for the two political prisoners.

SSN says the broadcast called **Special Assignment**, ‘went a long way towards exposing Lutfo Dlamini, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had lied to the South African public by claiming that there were neither political prisoners in Swaziland nor political exiles living in other countries’.

### **Times Publisher: No Need for democracy**

*5 June 2011*

Paul Loffler, publisher of the independent *Times of Swaziland* newspapers, says Swaziland doesn’t need democracy.

He is quoted by a South African newspaper today (5 June 2011) saying the Swazi cities are clean and the local municipalities work fine, so there’s little to complain about.

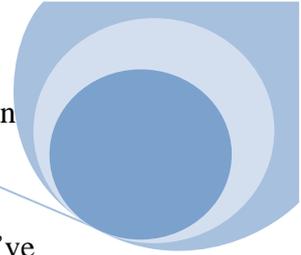
Loffler, who with his family is based in Namibia, was quoted by the *Sunday Times* newspaper in South Africa.

It was reporting on how Swaziland was ‘open for business’, despite the recent increases in protests from workers demanding democratic reforms in the kingdom ruled by King Mswati III.

Loffler, owns the only major media in Swaziland that are not under state control or in effect owned by King Mswati. His titles are the *Times of Swaziland*, the *Swazi News* and the *Times Sunday*.

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<sup>221</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/06/s-africa-tv-exposes-swazi-prisons.html>



He was quoted by the *Sunday Times* saying, ‘Swaziland doesn't need democracy. We’ve never had a genocide, we’ve never nationalised farms, our municipalities run like clockwork, the cities are clean, there are no potholes - or not many - and we have little violent crime.’

The newspaper went on to report that ‘he admitted there is room for improvement, particularly regarding the profligate spending on unnecessary items in the face of dire poverty. The King's proposed jet, for example - rumoured to cost in the region of US\$45-million - is a sticking point for many, as are the palaces, expensive cars, overseas holidays and extravagant shopping trips for the king's wives and children.’

Loffler inherited the *Times* newspaper on the death of his father Douglas Loffler.

In March 2010, Paul Loffler announced that he was to sue a tiny independent newspaper in Swaziland, the *Swazi Mirror*, after it reported that Loffler paid himself E1 million a month from his newspapers, while his staff worked for low wages. His lawyers said the report ‘implied our client is greedy, selfish and has no regard for the employees’ welfare’.

The *Times* group has a long history of kowtowing to King Mswati. In March 2011 it censored coverage from foreign media that criticised the king’s undemocratic regime;<sup>222</sup> in August 2010 it censored a paid advertisement that drew attention to the king’s publicly-stated refusal to engage in dialogue with democracy advocates.

In 2009, it dropped the column written by Mfomfo Nkhambule that was mildly critical of the royal regime in Swaziland;<sup>223</sup> in May 2009 Loffler personally grovelled publicly to the King after his newspaper reported truthfully that the King had purchased a fleet of Mercedes cars.<sup>224</sup>

In March 2007 the *Times Sunday* published a report from an international news agency that criticised King Mswati and included a reference to the King’s spending, ‘Swaziland is increasingly paralysed by poor governance, corruption and the private spending of authoritarian King Mswati III and his large royal family.’

The article went on to say, ‘The growing social crisis in the country and the lessening interest of donors to support King Mswati’s regime has also created escalating needs for social services beyond the scale of national budgets.’

King Mswati threatened to close down the *Times* group unless an unreserved apology was printed. It was, and the newspapers survived.<sup>225</sup>

### **Swazi King Shows he is Absolute Monarch**

7 June 2011

Swaziland’s King Mswati III has proved that he is an absolute monarch who rules his kingdom, disregarding parliament and the law courts.

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<sup>222</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/times-sunday-censors-self-on-king.html>

<sup>223</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/05/times-drops-swaziland-dissident.html>

<sup>224</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2009/05/swaziland-kings-cars-censorship.html>

<sup>225</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2007/11/closure-threat-to-times.html>

Today (7 June 2011), it is revealed that King Mswati instructed the House of Assembly and Senate not to discuss the land scam scandal engulfing Barnabas Dlamini, the man the King illegally appointed Prime Minister, and several of the PM's cabinet colleagues.

King Mswati also ordered Dlamini to drop a High Court case he was pursuing to allow him to keep the land he purchased at a knock-down price.<sup>226</sup>

Instead, the King says he will decide what will happen about the land. That means he will bypass both parliament and the law courts over a scandal that has caused public outrage in Swaziland for months.

When King Mswati pronounces, that will be the end of the matter: for his word is law.

The King's decision to intervene was kept private. Yesterday, the media were excluded from a joint meeting of the House of Assembly and Senate at which the King's dictate was given.

Swazi parliamentarians, who are clueless at the best of times, have taken the King's intervention without a murmur. If a report in today's *Times of Swaziland* is to be believed they were more concerned about the way the message from the throne was delivered. It seems there was not what they considered to be sufficient pomp and ceremony.

The *Times* also reported that parliament was instructed to form a 10-person committee which was due to seek an audience with the King last night to receive in detail his pronouncement.

So there we have it: we shouldn't be fooled into believing there is even a semblance of democracy in Swaziland. The truth is there for all to see: King Mswati is indeed an absolute monarch.

### **Striking Nurses Victimised**

*23 June 2011*

Nurses in Swaziland who went on strike in March 2011 to force the government to pay them overdue wages and allowances are being victimised by employers.

Nurses have been forced to attend disciplinary hearings and accused of engaging in an 'illegal strike'.

Public hospitals were closed during the strike and the nurses' action made news all the way across the world.<sup>227</sup>

The order by management came after the nurses held their own mass meeting two weeks ago, where they resolved not to attend the hearings, media in Swaziland report.

In March, police armed with rifles and batons tried to stop 400 peacefully marching nurses from protesting. In May 2011, nurses mounted a daily picket to draw attention to the poor level of services available at public hospitals.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/land-scam-treasonous-and-corrupt.html>

<sup>227</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/swaziland-is-military-state.html>

## 9. July

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### **Judge Refuses Suspension**

*1 July 2011*

In a provocative move Swaziland High Court Judge Thomas Masuku has ‘refused’ to be suspended.

He was told by Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi on Wednesday (29 June 2011) that he could no longer sit as a judge pending an investigation into a number of allegations about his conduct.<sup>229</sup>

But yesterday, for Judge Masuku it was business as usual. He sat in court and heard case as normal.

We must now wait and see how Chief Justice Ramodibedi responds. If Judge Masuku refuses to stop work what can the CJ do? Should we expect armed security officers at the Swazi High Court to arrest and jail Judge Masuku for ‘contempt of court’?

Or maybe, that’s contempt for CJ Michael Ramodibedi.

### **What the Judge Said About the King**

*1 July 2011*

There’s an interesting contrast in the way Swaziland’s two newspapers have reported the suspension of High Court Judge Thomas Masuku in their editions today (1 July 2011).

The *Swazi Observer*, a newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati III, has ignored the point that Masuku is alleged to have insulted the King. The *Observer* does this even though the full story has appeared in international media and on Internet sites.

The *Times of Swaziland*, the only independent daily newspaper in the kingdom, in contrast gives full details of what it is that Masuku said about the king.

For readers who haven’t been following this story in minute detail, here’s an extract from the *Times* today.

The ‘insult’ is contained in a judgement Masuku delivered on 11 January 2011.

The *Times* reports, ‘It was a case between Mkhondvo Aaron Maseko and the Commissioner of Police Isaac Magagula. Maseko sought an order directing the police to return his cattle which were seized from his kraal by the police who were heavily armed. He said they accused him of having stolen them from the King. Maseko argued that it was wrongful for the police to seize his 32 cattle without a court order.

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<sup>228</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/nurses-picket-for-health-supplies.html>

<sup>229</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/06/judge-king-has-forked-tongue.html>

‘He said they were armed with a letter from the King’s office, claiming it authorised them to attach the cattle. They claimed that they had been directed by the King to do so.

‘Judge Masuku in his detailed judgment directed the police to return the 32 cattle to Maseko because they were not authorised by a court order.

‘The police commissioner filed an appeal before the Supreme Court, through the Attorney General’s office. The matter at the Supreme Court was presided over by the Chief Justice Ramodibedi, sitting with Judges Ahmed Ebrahim and Dr Seth Twum.

‘Ramodibedi ruled in the commissioner’s favour who had argued that the cattle were not in the police’s possession, but had been taken to a King’s farm. He had argued that the police only acted as agents to ensure peace and order. He had also said the police had just accompanied Macaleni Dlamini who is in charge of the King’s cattle.

‘In his judgment, Ramodibedi warned Judge Masuku for language he used in his High Court judgment. He said Masuku used intemperate language with reference to the King.

‘Ramodibedi has said Judge Masuku’s statements, where he used “forked tongue” referring to the King was insulting to the head of state. In the judgment he had said, “It is an inappropriate language which does not belong to the King’s own loyal subjects. Such language must be deprecated in the strongest possible terms. To say that I was horrified by the use of this language is probably an understatement.”

‘This is an extract of Judge Masuku’s judgment, referred to by Chief Justice Ramodibedi as insulting to the King.

“It would indeed be surprising if His Majesty would have directed as alleged that the applicant’s (Mkhondvo Maseko) cattle should be seized at all and as it was, under the barrel of a gun without any due process of the law. I say so considering His Majesty’s public remarks, of which this court can take judicial notice, such as during the recent opening of the Hluti magistrates’ court and the police station on or about September 28, 2010, where he stated unequivocally in the presence of inter alia: the Judiciary, Executive, Parliamentarians and the police, that the Swazi people must avoid taking the law into their own hands. The actions of the police and Macaleni in this context, are in direct contradiction to His Majesty’s directive to the people of Swaziland and it would be hard to imagine let alone accept and thus incomprehensible that His Majesty could conceivably speak with a forked tongue, saying one thing to his people and then authorising his officers to do the opposite. I reject this notion as totally inaccurate and wrong, and which cannot be properly apportioned to the venerated office of His Majesty.”

### **Judge Inquiry to be in Private**

*1 July 2011*

The Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi has said he will conduct a private enquiry against Justice Thomas Masuku.

Ramodibedi said the matter where he has levelled 12 charges against Judge Masuku was not for public consumption yet. He also said the matter should not be publicised in the media until they have finalised the enquiry.

He expressed surprise that the matter was leaked to the media and refused to go into details about it, the *Times of Swaziland* reported today (1 July 2011).

### **Judge Now ‘Officially’ Suspended**

*2 July 2011*

High Court Judge Thomas Masuku has now officially been instructed that he is suspended from the bench with immediate effect.

One source says he has been told the suspension is ‘indefinite’, although under Swaziland’s Constitution judges cannot be suspended for longer than three months. Masuku had a letter delivered to his home on Thursday (30 June 2011).

Masuku seems to have accepted the instruction and is no longer working at the High Court. Masuku, is being accused by Swaziland Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi of ‘insulting’ King Mswati III and ‘actively associating with those who want to bring about unlawful change to the regime’ – that is associating with prodemocracy activists.

A disciplinary hearing has been set for 11 August 11 2011 before the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). CJ Ramodibedi, who has tabled the accusations against Masuku, which include defying directives of the CJ and ‘touting’ to become chief justice himself, is expected to chair the hearing himself.

In a previous letter sent<sup>230</sup> to Masuku by the chief justice, he was told that he was being suspended in accordance with section 158 (3) of the Swaziland Constitution. This says that a judge can be suspended by the King, acting on the advice of the chief justice.

Secretary of the JSC Lorraine Hlophle is reported in the *Swazi News* today (2 July 2011) saying, ‘I can confirm that the judge has been suspended. According to the legal instrument, the suspension is indefinite. However, the country’s Constitution stipulates that a suspension of a judge should not exceed three months. I am sure that the matter will be determined soon after completion of investigations.’

### **Not the First Time Judge Harassed**

*2 July 2011*

High Court Judge Thomas Masuku has been here before. Yesterday (1 July 2011), he was suspended with immediate effect from the bench and accused of a number of ‘serious acts of misbehaviour’, including ‘insulting’ King Mswati III and ‘actively associating with those who want to bring about unlawful change to the regime’.

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<sup>230</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/judges-letter-of-suspension-in-full.html>

This is not new territory for Masuku. In April 2003, the government led (then, as now) by Barnabas Dlamini tried to move Masuku from the High Court and send him to the Industrial Court.

Dlamini told Amnesty International at the time that it was evident from his rulings that Justice Masuku was ‘anti-government’ and that he had been transferred to another court where he would be ‘less political’.

Amnesty International devoted a whole section of its 2004 report on human rights in Swaziland<sup>231</sup> to Masuku’s case, which it called, ‘Perhaps the most sustained example of harassment.’

Masuku had been removed from the High Court and sent to the Industrial Court, but Masuku was having none of it. He fought the ruling, won, and was reinstated in the High Court in May 2004.

Amnesty reported that the attempted removal of Masuku was unconstitutional and that the government led by Dlamini did not give Masuku adequate opportunity to dispute his transfer.

Amnesty reported, ‘... the then Minister of Justice, Magwagwa Mdluli, announced at a press conference on the night of 3 April 2003 that Justice Thomas Masuku had been “transferred” from the High Court to the Industrial Court. There is no evidence that any of the requirements in terms of Section 100 [of the constitution then in operation] had been followed nor had the judge himself been informed.

‘He was to learn about it in the press on the following day.

‘On 7 April 2003 when Justice Masuku was hearing a case in the High Court counsel for the Government challenged his right to hear the case and showed him the government’s Legal Notice No.29 of 3 April 2003 which purported to announce the “transfer” of Thomas Masuku to the Industrial Court.

‘Justice Masuku informed Amnesty International in July 2003 that this was the first occasion on which he had seen the legal notice.’

Masuku elected not to report for duty at the Industrial Court.

The Amnesty report continued, ‘During a meeting with an Amnesty International delegation on 8 July 2003 Minister Mdluli made hostile references to court rulings by Justice Thomas Masuku and described the judiciary as being involved in an attack against the “other arms of government”. The then Prime Minister, Sibusiso [Barnabas] Dlamini, told Amnesty International on 9 July 2003 that it was evident from his rulings that Justice Masuku was “anti-government” and that he had been transferred to another court where he would be “less political”.

‘It is difficult to avoid the conclusion from these remarks as well as from the chain of events from 3 April 2003 that Justice Thomas Masuku was being punished for his forthright rulings and refusal to be drawn into improper contacts with government ministers and officials, as for

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<sup>231</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/59167652/Amnesty-International-Report-on-Swaziland-2004>

instance in their “Thursday Committee” meetings [the Special Committee of Justice chaired by the prime minister, which Amnesty said ‘has reportedly interfered extensively and intrusively with judicial decisions’].’

### **Judge Banned From Speaking to Media**

*4 July 2011*

Swaziland’s Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi has banned suspended high court judge Thomas Masuku from talking to the media.

The instruction is contained in a letter sent by Ramodibedi to Masuku confirming that he is suspended from the bench with immediate effect.

In the letter Ramodibedi also shows that he is angry that a female judge who he accused of having affair with Masuku has threatened him with a libel suit.

‘I am shocked that on June 29, 2011, and a few minutes after you were served with a letter informing you of the investigation/enquiry, I received a phone call from the judge threatening me with defamation following what you told her,’ he wrote in his letter to Masuku.

He then directed the judge not to discuss the suspension matter in the media until a disciplinary hearing set for 11 August, 2011 is completed.

There is some confusion over the legality of the suspension as the letter sent to Masuku is signed by Chief Justice Ramodibedi, yet the Swaziland Constitution states that only the monarch can suspend a judge (on the recommendation of the chief justice).

### **Lawyers Want Swazi CJ Suspended**

*7 July 2011*

Lawyers and civic organisations in Swaziland want the Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi suspended over his treatment of High Court Judge Thomas Masuku.<sup>232</sup>

And, lawyers are considering boycotting courts tomorrow (8 July 2011).

About 100 lawyers met yesterday (6 July 2011) at a private meeting called by the Law Society of Swaziland.

Later, Titus Mlangeni, president of the society, said lawyers ‘call upon the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) to without further delay suspend the Chief Justice, pending determination of complaints to be lodged against him’.

The Law Society has set up a committee to address a number of issues about Chief Justice Ramodibedi.

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<sup>232</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/judge-suspension-attacks-judiciary.html>

Mlangeni said the Law Society noted that there has been a continuous breakdown of the administration of Justice in the kingdom.

Thomas Masuku has been suspended following 12 charges made against him by the chief justice, including that Masuku insulted King Mswati III.<sup>233</sup>

In a separate development, civic organisations in Swaziland have also called for the sacking of Ramodibedi. The Centre for Human Rights, which works with nine civic organisations, called for his removal because he is undermining the rule of law in the kingdom.

In a statement it accused him of interfering in the management of the Industrial Court, particularly in frustrating the nomination and appointment process of the court's members.

The Centre for Human Rights also called for the reversal of the appointment of Judge Bheki Maphalala as a Justice of the Supreme Court. It says Maphalala is too inexperienced for the post and is subject of an inquiry from his work as a member of the Citizen Board instituted by the Minister for Home Affairs, Chief Mgwagwa Gamedze. The inquiry has not yet exonerated the board from any misconduct.

### **No School Fees, So Children Whipped**

*15 July 2011*

Children at a school in Swaziland are being whipped with up to 10 strokes of a stick, because their school fees have not been paid.

A majority of the pupils at Emtfonjeni High School are orphaned and depend on government to pay for their fees.

One parent told the *Times of Swaziland*, 'The pupils are merely owing the top-up fee as government paid the rest. We have indicated to the school authorities that we would pay at month-end. We did not know the children are being beaten up. The pupils said they were given 10 strokes each.'

School Principal Themba Shongwe confirmed to the newspaper that the pupils were being beaten for coming to school without the fees.

'We have been telling them over and over not to come to school without the money but they still come. We had no option but to give them punishment for not obeying the instruction to stay at home,' the newspaper reports him saying.

When asked how true it was that the pupils were being given as many as 10 strokes he said, 'If a pupil is told to stay at home but defies the instruction on the first day, you give that pupil a certain number of strokes. But if the same pupil comes to school again the following day, you have no choice but to increase the number of strokes.'

Shongwe said beating the pupils was also a means to make them put pressure on the parents to do something.

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<sup>233</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/judges-insult-that-was-not.html>

Wilson Ntshangase, the Swazi Minister of Education and Training, said the principal was wrong to punish the pupils because they are not responsible for paying their own school fees. 'The parents are the ones responsible for paying school fees, so the teacher must not vent anger on the pupils because eventually they will start hating school,' he told the newspaper. 'The principal must stop beating up the pupils,' he added.

### **Destitute HIV Patients Eat Cow Dung**

*20 July 2011*

Some HIV patients in Swaziland are so poor they are forced to eat cow dung to fill their stomachs before they can take life-saving ARV drugs.

They mix the dung with water to help them digest it.

ARV drugs do not work on an empty stomach, so patients have to use the dung to line their stomachs. They are too poor to afford food and they don't often get handouts from international aid agencies which work across Swaziland trying to keep people from starving.

The Swaziland Network of People with HIV and AIDS (SWANNEPHA) reported that people in the drought-stricken Lubombo are particularly affected.

Siyabonga Sithole, the SWANNEPHA field officer in Shiselweni region, confirmed to the *Swazi Observer* newspaper that some people relied on cow dung before taking the medication.

Joseph Souza, the Lugongolweni MP, told the newspaper he had personally met people who eat dung before taking their ARV tablets.

He told the newspaper that people were going hungry and there were not enough food hampers from aid agencies to cater for the 'thousands of needy people' who needed them.

The newspaper reported him saying, 'In some areas, for instance under my constituency, we find ourselves having to distribute one 50kg bag of meal-meal to 10 families. You can then imagine how much each family takes home from this.'

Thembi Nkambule, director of SWANNEPHA, said it was heart breaking to hear people forced to eat cow dung.

'What I know is that there were worse things that people on ARVs ended up taking lately just to have something in their stomachs for the medication to settle. That others have opted to take cow dung is very disturbing and it's an indication of how bad the situation has become,' the *Observer* reported him saying.

About 70 percent of the Swazi population are so poor they live in abject poverty, earning less than US\$2 a day. At least one third of the 1 million population of the kingdom receive some form of donor food aid each year. Swaziland is ruled by King Mswati III, who was reported

by Forbes in 2009 to have a personal fortune of US\$200 million. He has 13 wives, and each has a palace paid for by the Swazi people.<sup>234</sup>

### **Cow Dung Scandal: Government to Blame**

*21 July 2011*

The Swazi Government-created economic crisis is directly responsible for some destitute HIV-positive people having to eat cow manure because they cannot afford food.

Samkeliso Dlamini, from the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), which distributes food aid across Swaziland, said there was no food distribution programme specifically for people on ARVs because it had been stalled by the dire economic position in the kingdom, according to the *Swazi Observer* newspaper.

Food distribution would resume if the economy ever got better, he added.

Dlamini criticised Joseph Souza, the Lugongolweni MP, for making public the fact that people had to eat cow dung. He said the NDMA had delivered 400 bags (50kg) of mealie-meal to the community of Lugongolweni on Tuesday (19 July 2011) where some residents on ARVs were eating cow dung.

Souza responded by saying this was it was way too little and could not satisfy all the people there.

‘All centres get about 420 bags of mealie meal and this is not enough as some centres have bigger numbers of destitute people. Also, the distribution is also stretched far in between.

‘I still state that some people on ARVs are eating cow dung here, and there is ample evidence to that fact. You can come here and see it for yourself,’ he told the *Observer*.

### **PM ‘Wanted to Shut Down *Observer*’**

*26 July 2011*

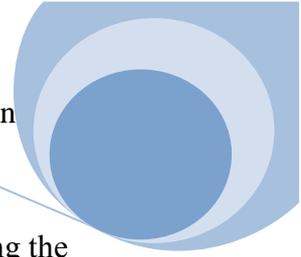
Swaziland Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini tried to get the *Swazi Observer* group closed down after the newspapers ran reports critical of him and called for him to resign or be sacked.

Dlamini went to Tibiyo, the company that owns the *Observer* group on behalf of King Mswati III, but was told to go away. This has emerged after Musa Ndlangamandla, the *Observer* group editor-in-chief, revealed on his Facebook site that Dlamini had convinced the king he was a ‘security risk’.

As I reported yesterday<sup>235</sup> (25 July 2011) Ndlangamandla says now the King believes this to be true he has been blacklisted and is not allowed anywhere near the King, who is sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch.

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<sup>234</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/04/king-is-rich-but-not-swaziland.html>



Previously, Ndlangamandla had been a key member of the King's team, accompanying the monarch on overseas' trips and he wrote speeches for him.

Since Ndlangamandla wrote on Facebook his friends have been filling in some of the background.

They say Barnabas Dlamini had become angry because the *Swazi Observer* had written articles critical of him. These included a series of articles about business deals the PM had been involved in, and his part in a long-running land scam deal, involving senior politicians and members of the Swazi Royal Family.

The *Observer* newspapers also ran reports from trade unionists and civil society groups calling for Dlamini to resign as Prime Minister.

In a column in his own newspaper Thulani Thwala, the editor of the *Observer*, called on Dlamini to quit.<sup>236</sup>

Later, Alec Lushaba, the *Weekend Observer* editor, also said Dlamini must go.

Dlamini was so incensed by the reports he went to Tibiyo which is chaired by Prince Logcogco, who is also chair of Liqoqo the king's advisory council, demanding Ndlangamandla be fired.

One account also has it that Dlamini demanded the newspapers be closed down.

Logcogco backed Ndlangamandla. At this point, sources say, Dlamini threatened to resign as Prime Minister because he believed Logcogco and Ndlangamandla were out against him.

In March 2011, a report circulated the world that Dlamini had threatened to resign (no specific reason was given). He later denied it.<sup>237</sup> But he did tell the *Times Sunday*, 'there were people who were out to ruin him'.

### **Students Held on Protest March**

*27 July 2011*

Several students have been detained during the protests today (27 July 2011) in Swaziland, the Associated Press reports.

Marches have been taking place all over the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The protests were peaceful but heavily-guarded, the AP reports.

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<sup>235</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/07/pm-says-editor-is-security-risk.html>

<sup>236</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/swazi-kings-paper-tells-pm-to-quit.html>

<sup>237</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/did-swazi-pm-offer-to-resign.html>

More than 500 people demonstrated in the capital Mbabane while nearly 1,000 protested in the western town of Siteki.

The protests are against poor government in the kingdom which has led to a shortage of essential medical supplies and a failing economy.

AIDS groups have warned that the country faces a shortage of anti-retroviral drugs. More than a quarter of Swazis between the ages of 15 and 49 are believed to carry HIV.

Labour union negotiations also failed this week. Wandile Sifundza, a teachers' union leader, said members want a change to a constitutional monarch, who can be trusted to manage national finances.

### **Court Backs Right to Protest**

*28 July 2011*

The Industrial Court turned down an application from the Swaziland Government to have yesterday's protest action banned.

In what is becoming a regular tactic, the government left it to the last minute before running to court. In the past it has succeeded in scuppering the plans of unions to protest, but this time it came unstuck.

The government claimed that all mediation efforts had not been exhausted: the court disagreed.

The protest was stopped temporarily yesterday morning (27 July 2011) while unions and government went to court, but started later in the day.

The labour unions' attorney Thulani Maseko told the Industrial Court that government knew about the protest action as early as 23 June, 2011.

'It is clear that government has failed to address the issues raised by the labour unions, looking at the time frame these matters have been brought before it. The application in itself is one of government's delaying tactics,' Maseko said.

The Industrial Court ruled there was no urgency in the government's application and dismissed it. It said the government could make a new application if circumstances changed.

### **Thousands March in Five Towns**

*28 July 2011*

From: *PUDEMO News*

The trade union movement of Swaziland under the banner of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland-TUCOSWA won at the industrial court against the Swazi regime which sought to ban protests.

The workers represented by human rights Lawyer Thulani Maseko won this case and according to reports from Swaziland: “as we speak thousands of workers are now assembled in five towns across the country to protest undemocratic rule in Swaziland.” says Fundizwi Skhondze the National Organising Secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions.

Among the demands the workers want the cabinet to step down. Prime Minister Sbusiso and his crew have failed to address major issues raised by the workers. Just a few days ago hundreds of people living with HIV AIDS marched to the ministry of health to demand treatment. They demand ARVs and other treatment. Organisers of the march received support from various other organisations.

On the other hand union leaders have cautioned one another against opportunistically using the state radio because of its bias and distorting reporting. Musa Sfundza of the teachers union in the Lubombo region says that when thousands of workers march the regimes media reports only 200; something he says is against the workers.

PUDEMO fully supports these demonstrations and calls for unity among workers. PUDEMO president Mario Masuku and other PUDEMO leaders are expected to join some of the marches in support of the workers.

PUDEMO calls on trade unions and organisations across the world to send messages of support to TUCOSWA.

# 10. August

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## **Global Week of Action Launch**

*18 August 2011*

Statement by Swaziland United Democratic Front

The month of September has come to be synonymous with GWOAS. This activity is once again upon us and the Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) hereby officially announces this year's (2011) programme.

### **Campaign Issues**

1. SA bailout for SD (insist on stringent & measurable governance reform conditions with taut timelines)
2. No to salary cuts!
3. Education crisis (demand tertiary scholarships for ALL qualifying candidates and re-open & keep colleges open)
4. Judicial crisis (demand sacking of CJ & High Court registrar, re-instate Thomas Masuku, & independence of the judiciary)
5. Abolition of Tinkhundla & return to multiparty democracy

Venues for Activities (5th – 9th September 2011)

Siteki  
Mbabane  
Matsapha/Manzini  
Nhlangano

### **Call to Affiliates, Partners, & Global Solidarity Network**

We call on our affiliates to start mobilizing in earnest & to ensure that members fill the streets on these dates

We make a special call to the labour component of the SUDF to do all in their power to ensure that their members fully participate in this year's GWOAS programme

We call on our internal partners, including the Swaziland coalition of Concerned Civic Organizations (SCCCO), Foundation for Socio-Economic Justice (FSEJ), International Research Academy for Labour & Education (IRALE), Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC), Coalition of Informal Economy Associations of Swaziland (CIEAS), Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), Law Society of Swaziland, the friendly Swaziland business community, Swaziland Positive Living (SWAPOL), and many others to also prepare for action

We commission our operational & campaign wing, the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) and all its chapters worldwide to intensify preparations for GWOAS as usual

We invite our perennial partners in South Africa, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the ANCYL, SACP, SSN, and others to, in addition to pickets in South Africa, join our demonstrations in the streets of Swaziland during GWoAS

Finally, we appeal to our global friends, including Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) and Swazi Vigil in London, Action Now in America, WTUC worldwide, Afrika Kontakt (AC) in Denmark, etc., to engage in activities during GWoAS to spread the word for our cause in their various locations

Forward to multiparty democracy – Amandla!!!

### **Police Attack Protesting Swazi Students**

*24 August 2011*

Reports are coming out of Swaziland this afternoon (24 August 2011) that university students have been attacked by police.

Some students are said to have been picked up by police and their whereabouts are unknown. It is a typical tactic of police to round up protesters, drive them off in police vehicles and dump them out in the bush many kilometres from any town and leave them to make their own way home.

Other times police have taken protesters to police stations and assaulted them.

The students were marching on the Swazi Parliament to protest that the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) did not open this month at the start of the academic year because there is not enough money to give scholarships to more than 500 students. In a typical year in the recent past 1,200 would get scholarships.

### **US Decries King on MTN Deal**

*24 August 2011*

The American Embassy in Swaziland has accused King Mswati III of interfering in the sale of shares of cellphone company MTN – so he could buy them himself at a cheaper rate.

The King, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, caused the ousting of Tebogo Mogapi, the MTN chief executive officer (CEO) in Swaziland, the embassy says.

Wikileaks has released a cable<sup>238</sup> from the American Embassy in Swaziland to the State Department in Washington dated 9 October 2009. The cable marked 'sensitive' also claims that Mogapi did not have his work permit renewed (thereby meaning he had to give up his job and leave the kingdom) because he opposed the Swaziland Government's 'efforts to use the MTN network for surveillance on political dissidents'.

The cable written by US Ambassador to Swaziland, Earl Irvine, says, 'Royal politics and King Mswati's business interests appear to have caused the ouster of Mobile Telephone

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<sup>238</sup> <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/10/09MBABANE286.html>

Network (MTN) CEO Tebogo Mogapi and halted parastatal Swaziland Post and Telecommunications Corporation (SPTC) from selling the MTN shares it owns to raise money for a Next Generation Networks (NGN) cell phone project.

‘Industry and press observers privately indicated that the king, who already owns many MTN shares, had wanted to purchase the MTN shares himself at a cheaper price than the buyer, MTN, was offering SPTC.

‘Government officials later prevented the sale, and recently did not renew the work permit for CEO Mogapi, a South African citizen, apparently in retaliation for his role in the transaction, as well as the CEO's reported decision to oppose government efforts to use the MTN network for electronic surveillance on political dissidents.’

The cable goes on, ‘The government’s halt of parastatal SPTC's sale of MTN shares demonstrates the impact the king's and other influential individuals' private business interests can have on business transactions in Swaziland.

‘Government officials would likely prefer a more malleable Swazi CEO at MTN who would cooperate more fully with royal and government wishes.’

# 11. September

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## US Frank Assessment of Swazi King

4 September 2011

The US Embassy in Mbabane says King Mswati III's mother had a sexual affair with Lutfo Dlamini, Swaziland's Foreign Minister.

And the Queen Mother Ntombi's 'associations with men' has undermined the power she has to influence King Mswati's decision-making.

The revelation comes in a diplomatic cable written in February 2010, by Earl Irvine, the US Ambassador to Swaziland and just released by Wikileaks.<sup>239</sup>

Irvine wrote to Washington about what he called 'Witchcraft and More: A Portrait of Influences on King Mswati III'.

In the cable marked 'confidential', Irvine says 'traditional leaders, superstition, and members of the royal family' are the major influences on the king. His ministers, however, 'remain his servants'.

Irvine writes, 'The king's wives' opinions matter to the king, especially his third wife, LaMbikisa, who has an advanced degree and is the only wife to whom the king proposed'.

Irvine goes on, 'King Mswati III believes in muti (traditional medicine used to cast spells or curses), and attempts to use muti to attack the king are taken seriously'.

He writes, 'In 1989 Prince Mfana Sibili was accused of high treason when he allegedly used muti to try to take away the king's powers. When a foreign judge, brought in to hear the case, dismissed it after hearing the charges, a traditional court was installed to convict the prince.'

He says that 'muti people' hold great sway within the royal family, and that the king must eat and drink whatever they give him during traditional ceremonies, particularly when in seclusion. 'If they are unhappy with the direction the king is taking the country, then the king has cause to worry.'

Irvine goes on, 'Although Queen Mother Ntombi is considered by many observers to be a powerful figure within the royal family, [name of informant] indicated that her authority has been undermined by her "associations with men," including current Foreign Minister Lutfo Dlamini.

'According to [informant], Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini is the king's "loyal hangman," a relationship that dates to the prime minister's alleged attempted suicide in 1990 or 1991.'

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<sup>239</sup> <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10MBABANE58.html>

Irvine writes, Mswati III uses the investment company African Alliance to move his money around internationally, and ‘Stephen Gidinza is quite influential and involved in all of the king’s international transactions’.

The informant indicated that ‘the king has become more decisive during his years in office, especially where his interests are at issue, and he views ministers and officials who tell him he cannot do something as cowards’.

Swazi Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini is the king's loyal ‘hangman,’ Irvine writes, ‘an assertion that suggests that the king places absolute trust in Barnabas.’

‘Instead of looking to influence the king, the Prime Minister acts as the king’s steadfast servant, a relationship that dates back to a suicide attempt by Barnabas in 1990 or 1991.’

‘According to [informants] in an unsuccessful attempt kept secret from the public, Barnabas tried to commit suicide after his involvement in a corruption scandal during his tenure as Minister of Finance became known.’

‘As part of making amends to the king, Barnabas reportedly prostrated himself before the king, giving himself over as the king’s servant.’

### **US Says Swazi King ‘Imbalanced’**

*4 September 2011*

The US Embassy in Swaziland says King Mswati III is ‘not intellectually well developed’ and ‘is not a reader’. It also calls him ‘imbalanced’.

The comments about the Swazi king came from Earl Irvine, the US Ambassador to Swaziland, in February 2010.

In a confidential cable to Washington released by Wikileaks, Irvine says King Mswati, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch, has a ‘lack of wisdom’.<sup>240</sup>

Quoting an informant, Irvine writes the king is ‘not a reader, and will not review documents left for him. [The informant] called the king “not intellectually well-developed,” and contrasted the current sovereign’s scant educational background with Sobhuza II, who was educated at Lovedale College in South Africa alongside future leaders of South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC).

‘Essentially a bastard outsider to the royal family, King Mswati III was plucked from relative obscurity when members of the royal family could not come to an agreement on a successor to King Sobhuza II.

‘After Mswati III was selected to be the next king, a posthumous marriage of Sobhuza II to Ntombi [the Queen Mother] was quickly arranged, according to our interlocutor.’

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<sup>240</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/09/us-frank-assessment-of-swazi-king.html>

Irvine writes, 'Unlike in his early years, the king now identifies and pushes specific projects, and will look to replace ministers or employees who are unable to provide progress on those projects.'

Irvine quotes his informant calling King Mswati 'imbalanced'. He gives an anecdote to illustrate this.

'The king, [the informant] said, invited about forty officials and advisors to a basement in one of his palaces, where they all sat on the floor to attend to him. King Mswati III turned up the heater, which warmed the floor first, until the temperature in the room reached about 40 degrees Celsius, and told inconsequential stories to those gathered while they sweated, merely to show them he was in power.'

### **Swazi Government Corruption Gets Worse: US**

*5 September 2011*

The US Embassy in Mbabane says corruption by Swazi Government officials and requests for 'kickbacks' has gotten substantially worse over the past few years.

Earl Irvine, the US Ambassador to Swaziland, says the problem is so bad that US companies are put at a disadvantage when they do business in the kingdom.

Swaziland is ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch. King Mswati handpicks the government in Swaziland.

Irvine's comments were made in a diplomatic cable he wrote to Washington in November 2009 and just made public by Wikileaks.<sup>241</sup>

The cable marked 'sensitive' recalls that Ambassador Irvine hosted a lunch for 15 managing director-level leaders of American businesses and franchises in Swaziland.

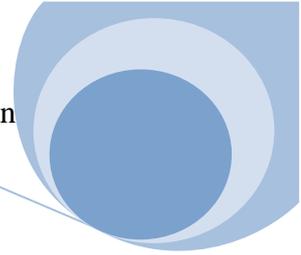
Irvine writes, 'The overarching impression left from the business leaders' comments was that government corruption and requests for kickbacks have gotten substantially worse in Swaziland over the past few years, costing their enterprises a great deal of business to less scrupulous local and regional competitors.'

'Participants indicated that requests for bribes by government officials have become more blatant. When participants discussed the new Anti-Corruption Commission, they were dismissive of its possible effectiveness and openly scoffed at Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini's anti-corruption campaign.'

'Business leaders also mentioned that courts tended to hand down lenient sentences to those few actually convicted for corruption.'

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<sup>241</sup> <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/11/09MBABANE319.html>



### **‘Mobile Phones Cut’ as Swaziland Protests**

*11 September 2011*

The People’s United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) in Swaziland is reporting today (5 September 2011) that mobile phone communications in the capital Mbabane have been cut on the first day of a planned five day protest in the kingdom.

It reports sole mobile communication provider MTN Swaziland, which is 51% owned by King Mswati, has shut communication. This is a repeat of what happened last year during the 1st Global week of action when communication was shut, PUDEMO says.

PUDEMO also quotes organisers in Mbabane saying that more than 2,000 protesters have started marching around the capital and the numbers are growing. The police and the army as expected have turned back many buses and the numbers currently on the streets have been locally mobilised.

PUDEMO condemns this cowardice and calls on the international community to condemn the Swazi regime for resorting to measures that have a potential of putting the lives of ordinary people in danger.

Mary Pais da Silver, coordinator of Swaziland Democracy Campaign-SDC in Swaziland reports that they are now using ‘alternative’ communication means to communicate with allies and friends outside of the capital.

PUDEMO says the marches will spread to other towns tomorrow and throughout the whole week. The people are demanding the unbanning of political parties, return of exiles, a democratic constitution, release of political prisoners, end to corruption, the freezing of a government process to retrench more than 7,000 public workers, availability of medication in public hospitals and suspension of the proposed scholarship policy which effectively makes education the preserve of the rich elite.

The activities will be taking place in 21 cities around the world. Activists from a number of countries have also joined the marches in Swaziland in solidarity with their comrades and friends. Other activities are scheduled to take place in Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leon, UK, Greece, France, Denmark, Norway, US, South Africa and Sweden to mention but a few of the countries where SDC chapters joined by Swazi exiles will also be active.

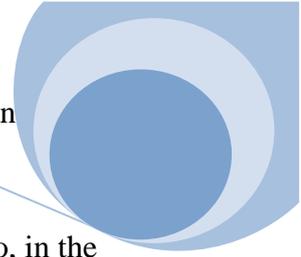
### **Swazi Police Fire Teargas at Protesters**

*7 September 2011*

Reports coming out of Swaziland are that protesters and by-standers have been injured by police teargas as the Global Week of Action entered day three today (7 September 2011).

The People’s United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), a banned political party in Swaziland, reports serious confrontation between the police and marchers in Siteki, a small town in eastern Swaziland. Police are said to have fired teargas at demonstrators.

Reports are confused, but it is said that many protesters and other people going about their business have been injured.



PUDEMO says 2,000 people marched in Siteki; another 1,000 protested in Nhlanguano, in the south of Swaziland.

In Manzini, the kingdom's main business city, there was also a reported stand-off with the police refusing to allow a march to continue.

A reported 3,000 students from the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) also marched to the offices of the Ministry of Education in the capital, Mbabane. They were protesting about the Swazi Government cuts in student allowances.

An early report from the scene said students blocked important roads in Mbabane. A later report said seven students and two bystanders had been injured by police teargas.

### **300 Swazi Police Stop 17 Marchers**

*16 September 2011*

More than 300 Swaziland police officers were out in force to stop 17 prodemocracy marchers from getting close to King Mswati III yesterday (15 September 2011).

And water cannons were kept close at hand in case the marchers tried to storm the meeting where the King was speaking.

The police were protecting the Smart Partnership Dialogue at the Mavuso Trade and Exhibition centre, Manzini, where the King was addressing an audience on how they should work to get his kingdom out of its present financial mess.

The protesters wanted to deliver a petition to the king calling for multiparty democracy; the inclusion of politics in the agenda of the smart Partnership Dialogue and the immediate resolution of the fiscal and judicial crisis.

In a farcical scene, a single policeman stopped the marchers as they started out from the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) headquarters. The marchers from the Constituent Assembly included priests from the Swaziland Council of Churches, members of the African United Democratic Party (AUDP) and representatives of the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC).

They were told they could go no further than 100 metres from SNAT HQ.

The protesters did as they were told and halted their march. Even so, a kombi loaded with plain clothed police officers arrived and confirmed the order from the traffic officer, the *Times of Swaziland* reported.

It said the SNAT Centre was swarming with more than 300 police officers and correctional services officers, some of whom were armed.

Police water cannon and caspir were also parked close by just in case there was need to diffuse the march.

Member of the Constituent Assembly Secretariat Kison Shongwe told the marchers, 'This is a peaceful march and the intention is just to deliver a petition to the King.'

'We were of the impression that the King and the Queen Mother were ours too, but the manner in which we are being stopped here suggests otherwise.'

'If we are being stopped now, we want the whole world to know that innocent Swazis who wanted to deliver a petition to their King were stopped by the police. Our constitutional rights to assembly are being undermined.'

Previously, King Mswati III had said the Smart Partnership was open for all Swazis to air their views.

### **Gay Prejudice Rife in Swaziland**

*22 September 2011*

Discrimination against gay and lesbian people in Swaziland is rife and extends to workplaces, the churches and even on to the streets.

This has been revealed in a submission<sup>242</sup> to the United Nations review on human rights in Swaziland.

HOOP (House of Our Pride), a support group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Inter-sex (GLBTI) people, reported, 'It is a common scene for GLBTI to be verbally insulted by by-passers in public places. [There is] defamatory name calling and people yelling out to see a GLBTI person's reproductive part are some of the issues facing GLBTI in Swaziland.'

'Faith houses have been known to discriminate against GLBTI, advocating for the alienation of GLBTI in the family and society, while maintaining that these GLBTI are possessed by demons.'

HOOP also says GLBTI people are often discriminated against at work and there have been well known cases of this.

In one of the first reports of its kind detailing sexual orientation discrimination in Swaziland, HOOP reveals, 'GLBTI are hugely discriminated against in the community, as they are not recognized at community meetings and their points are often not minuted at these meetings nor are they allowed to take part in community services.'

Police often ridicule GLBTI people if they report they have been victims of violent crime. 'A good example of such practices is in the on-going case of a well-known GLBTI in Swaziland, Patricia Dlodlu, who is currently in incarceration for a different offence but is constantly ridiculed by the media and police because of her sexuality.'

HOOP is calling on the Swaziland Government to include GLBTI issues in its agenda 'as this will help to increase the acceptance of GLBTI, even at community levels'.

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<sup>242</sup> <http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session12/SZ/HOOP-HouseOurPride-eng.pdf>

It also wants GLBTI activities to be decriminalized and given due recognition in society.

It says, 'The government of Swaziland should bring into place laws that protect GLBTI people's rights at workplaces, social, faith and community gatherings and also protect their right to inherit their partner's belonging, if willed to them on their partner's passing away.'

### **Swazi School 'Tortures' Students**

*22 September 2011*

Mhlatane High School in northern Swaziland has been accused by Save the Children of 'using torture' against its students.

It says corporal punishment is 'institutionalised' at Mhlatane and 'teachers can administer as many strokes [of the cane] as they desire, much against the limit stipulated in the regulations from the Ministry of Education.

'Students at this school are also subjected to all forms of inhumane treatment in the name of punishment. The State has known about the torture of students that go on at Mhlatane High School for a long time, but has not done anything to address this violation of fundamental rights.'

This revelation is made by Save the Children in a submission to the United Nations review on human rights in Swaziland.<sup>243</sup> It cites Mhlatane as the worst case, but says excessive corporal punishment is rife in Swazi schools.

Save the Children reports, 'The hitting of students by teachers in schools is not limited to strokes of the cane, but includes such methods as a slap with the open hand, kicks and fists.

'In one case in a school in the south of Swaziland, a young girl was kicked in the groin by her teacher after she refused to lift up her leg during physical education classes. She had told the teacher she cannot lift her leg up because she was wearing nothing underneath. This angered the teacher and earned the girl a kick in the groin.

'The damage occasioned led to paralysis as the girl walks with difficulty today, and her menstrual cycle was disturbed since then. Although initially protected by the principal and other Ministry of Education officials in Nhlanguano, the teacher was eventually arrested after intervention by the girl's elder sister. The prosecution is still ongoing at the Nhlanguano Magistrates Court.'

There is also what Save the Children calls 'State sponsored torture of children'.

'On New Year's Day 2011, State police from the Sithobela and Siphofanenei police stations arrested a young girl of 18 years who was at the time seven months pregnant. The police had been told to arrest her on suspicion of having committed an abortion some two years earlier. The police were acting on information obtained from her father, who was not staying with her at the time. She was arrested and kept in custody for 29 hours.

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<sup>243</sup> <http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session12/SZ/JS3-JointSubmission3-eng.pdf>

‘During the interrogation, she was tortured, had police sit on her visibly bulging stomach and treated inhumanely. During these gruelling 29 hours, the heavily pregnant 18 year old was shuffled between two police stations, that is Sithobela and Siphofaneni, and subject to more torture. No charges were preferred against her.

‘In April 2010, a group of 49 Grade VI pupils were subjected to torture in the hands of police officers over missing money, E10 (approximately US\$1.40).

‘The pupils from Malkerns Valley Primary School were ordered to do 200 squats in order to force the culprit to own up to stealing the money. The 200 squats were beyond the ability of children of this age (most of whom were on average 11 years old).’

Save the Children goes on, ‘In November 2010, an 18-year old Grade VI pupil was tortured by State police from Bhunya Police Station on suspicion that he had killed another person.

‘As a result the young boy could hardly walk for two weeks, during which time he missed school. Police denied ever torturing the boy, but admitted to having ‘interviewed’ him. The boy stated that he was taken to the police station, where he was made to lie facing upwards on a bench, with his hands tied underneath. His head was then covered with a plastic bag just below the neck. One officer then sat on his chest, and told him to pat the bench when he wanted to speak.

‘He was also physically assaulted, kicked on the ribs, and beaten under the feet. He was later released and no charges were preferred against him. Police spokeswoman, Wendy Hleta was quick to state that the allegations of torture were unfounded. No investigations were launched into this matter.’

In its report Save the Children calls on the Swaziland Government to make corporal punishment in schools and society generally illegal.

### **Swazi Minister of Justice Fired**

*29 September 2011*

David Matse, the Swaziland Minister for Justice, has been fired from his job because he refused to sign a dismissal letter for High Court Judge Thomas Masuku.

Usually reliable sources say that Prince Mgwagwa was appointed acting Minister of Justice in Matse’s place and he duly signed the letter. Judge Masuku is now officially sacked.

Matse has refused to comment publicly about his dismissal, but he did confirm to the *Times of Swaziland* today (29 September 2011) that he has been told to ‘stay at home’ until at least next Tuesday (4 October 2011) when Barnabas Dlamini, the Swazi Prime Minister, returns from a trip to the United States.

Judge Masuku has been at the centre of a controversy over attempts by Michael Ramodibedi, the Swaziland Chief Justice to dismiss him for a number of alleged misconducts, including insulting King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch.

Lawyers in Swaziland have been boycotting courts for the past eight weeks in protest at the way Masuku has been treated. They also want the Chief Justice removed from office.

Representatives of the Law Society of Swaziland have been summoned to meet Ligoqo, the advisory committee for King Mswati today.

### **Amnesty International: Reinstate Judge Masuku**

*30 September 2011*

Statement: Amnesty International<sup>244</sup>

#### **Sacked Swaziland judge should be reinstated**

The Swazi authorities should immediately reinstate a prominent high court judge, Justice Thomas Masuku, who has been sacked on trumped-up charges.

Justice Masuku was suspended in June. He was then subjected to unfair dismissal proceedings over allegations made to Swaziland's King Mswati III by the country's Chief Justice, Michael Ramodibedi. These included a claim that Justice Masuku had insulted the King in one of his rulings.

Amnesty International is also calling for the reinstatement of the country's Justice Minister, Reverend David Matse, who was suspended after refusing to authorize the Judge's dismissal.

"These allegations had no basis in fact or law to justify the proceedings. Firing Justice Masuku and suspending Justice Minister Matse illustrates the depth of the crisis in the rule of law in Swaziland," said Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Africa

"Masuku's hearing was effectively a kangaroo court which was chaired by the Chief Justice, the main complainant. It was held behind closed doors and breached international standards on fair trial," she said.

Justice Masuku has been harassed and suspended in the past for challenging unlawful royal decrees. His rulings have helped protect human rights and his resistance to government pressure on the judiciary has been crucial to maintaining its independence.

Swaziland's Law Society had denounced the unfairness of the proceedings against Justice Masuku and his dismissal, as have other law bodies in the region. It is campaigning for the removal of the Chief Justice.

Amnesty International had previously criticized the nature of the dismissal proceedings against Justice Masuku. It called on the government to ensure proceedings were transparent, impartial, independent and conducted in public.

"The dismissal of Justice Masuku, based on vaguely stated allegations and handled in a grossly unfair manner, sets an ominous precedent for other judges who may wish to take similar stands in carrying out their duties," said Michelle Kagari.

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<sup>244</sup> <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/sacked-swaziland-judge-should-be-reinstated>

## 12. October

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### **Mass Protest to Reinstate Judge**

*4 October 2011*

A one-day mass protest involving civic organisations, labour unions and political parties is being planned for Thursday (6 October 2011) to demand the reinstatement of sacked High Court Judge Thomas Masuku, the *Times of Swaziland* reports today (4 October 2011).

The protest action follows a meeting held on Saturday at the SNAT Centre where labour organisations had congregated to discuss, among other issues, the judicial crisis.

The Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL), Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), resolved to first petition Parliament on Thursday before lobbying stakeholders and other organisations including the Local Kombis Association to join in.

Also joining the organisations on Thursday will be political parties including PUDEMO, Ngwane National Liberatory Congress and the Law Society.

### **UN Tells Swaziland: Stop Flogging Children**

*11 October 2011*

Swaziland has been told it should stop using corporal punishment in schools, because it violates the rights of children.

But the practice of whippings and floggings is so ingrained in Swazi schools that the top teachers' union official said he was surprised that inflicting corporal punishment was against a child's rights.

The United Nations Human Rights Periodic Review held in Geneva last week received a report jointly written by Save the Children and other groups that corporal punishment in Swazi schools was out of control. The report highlighted Mhlatane High School in northern Swaziland where it said pupils were 'tortured' in the name of punishment.

The report stated, 'Students at this school are also subjected to all forms of inhumane treatment in the name of punishment. The state has known about the torture of students that go on at Mhlatane High School for a long time, but has not done anything to address this violation of fundamental rights.'

But Mhlatane is not the only school in Swaziland to use excessive corporal punishment. There have been numerous cases of children beaten so fiercely that they have needed hospital treatment.

According to a report in the *Times of Swaziland* today (11 October 2011), countries which participated in the Human Rights Periodic Review supported the United States of America's call for Swaziland to abolish corporal punishment.

The *Times* reported, ‘Not only did these countries raise concerns against corporal punishment in the country but they also came down hard on the country’s slow progress on children’s rights. The countries are said to have felt that corporal punishment is practised far too much in the country and that it directly infringes on children’s rights, hence the call for its abolishing.’

The *Times* also quoted Sibongile Mazibuko, President of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), saying as teachers they had been underestimating the impact corporal punishment has on children rights.

‘It came as a surprise what impact corporal punishment has in terms of violating children’s rights. In fact, we were not aware we are violating children’s rights. The submissions by the countries and the criticism received by the country during the meeting was an eye-opener that corporal punishment should be abolished,’ the *Times* quotes Mazibuko saying.

### **Swazi Minister Lies to UN about Gays**

*14 October 2011*

Mgwagwa Gamedze, the Acting Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of Swaziland, lied to the United Nations when he said that gays and lesbians in the kingdom had not asked for repressive laws to be overturned.

The official summary of working party of the Universal Periodical Review of human rights in Swaziland held on 4 October 2011 states, ‘Mr Gamedze specifically addressed the issues of same-sex relationships and the death penalty. He noted that while consensual same-sex relations are illegal in Swaziland, the Government does not pursue prosecutions. He also claimed that so far the GLBTI [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Inter-sex] movement in Swaziland had not challenged these policies and clarified that the Government would only look into these issues if and when this happened.’

This simply not true and Gamedze knows it. In fact, one of the written submissions to the working party was from HOOP (House of Our Pride), a support group for GLBTI people in Swaziland.

It listed a range of discriminations that GLBTI people in Swaziland suffer, including in faith groups, at work and through police harassment.

In its submission, HOOP stated the Swazi Government needed to do more for GLBTI people. ‘These measures include: the de-criminalization of GLBTI practices currently treated as sodomy and the provision of extensive health care.’

In a list of recommendations to the government, HOOP included:

‘GLBTI activities should be decriminalized and given due recognition in the society.

‘The government of Swaziland should bring into place laws that protect GLBTI people’s rights at workplaces, social, faith and community gatherings and also protect their right to

inherit their partner's belonging, if willed to them on their partner's passing away. The above law should be strictly enforced and culprits severely punished.'

So there you have it. Gamedze lied to the UN working party. GLBTI people have challenged government policies and they want laws changed.

Gamedze told the working party that the government would only look into the GLBTI issues once these policies had been 'challenged'.

The policies have been challenged, so now the government must look into them. Unless, of course, the promise to do so is just another lie from Gamedze and the Swaziland Government.

### **Judge Fired for Disrespecting his Betters**

*14 October 2011*

Judge Thomas Masuku was fired from the Swaziland High Court because he showed 'disrespect' to his betters, one of the men responsible for his sacking has revealed.

Masuku even laughed out loud when the charges against him were read out at his Judicial Service Commission (JSC) disciplinary hearing, it is claimed.

Sibusiso Shongwe, described by the *Times of Swaziland* newspaper as 'an influential member' of the JSC, said Masuku disrespected the tribunal, the Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi and King Mswati III.

Masuku's sacking has caused an outcry inside and outside Swaziland. Lawyers have been boycotting the law courts for 10 weeks and respected judicial and human rights organisations across the world have condemned his sacking as an attack on the judicial system.

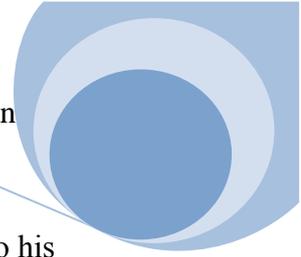
Shongwe told a meeting at a Swazi primary school that among other things, Masuku was fired for showing lack of respect during his hearing on 11 August 2011.

The *Times* reports today (14 October 2011), 'He [Shongwe] said to prove that he lacked respect for the tribunal, he [Masuku] even laughed when the charges were put to him, instead of responding.

'Not only did Shongwe say Masuku disrespected the tribunal which was chaired by his boss, Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi and his employers, the JSC, but he said he just lacked respect for authority. He said it was even worse because he showed lack of respect for the King.'

The *Times* reported Shongwe saying, 'Judge Thomas Masuku was fired for lack of respect for authority. What happened to him is exactly what happens to a person who lacks respect for authority. To show that he lacked respect, Masuku laughed when he was asked about the charges that had been laid against him.'

The *Times* reported, 'Shongwe said Masuku was not expected to exhibit such behaviour during the hearing.



‘Shongwe further revealed that Judge Masuku was fired for showing lack of respect to his boss, the CJ.

“‘The CJ issued a directive that no judge should leave the court without his authority. One day Masuku left the court without informing his authority. When the CJ discovered that he was not in court or in his chambers, he called him. In response Masuku told the CJ that he should not talk to him as if he was a child. He further told the CJ that he would rather resign when he was asked why he was absent from work,” said Shongwe.

“He made an example that even within a family, there has to be respect and the judge showed that he lacked respect for his boss.””

Masuku had been accused of using the term ‘forked tongue’ in reference to King Mswati.

The *Times* reported, ‘Shongwe said the judge was not supposed to use that term when referring to the King. He said Masuku should have just put it in simple terms that he did not believe that the King had said what he is alleged to have said, not to then say if the King said it, he was speaking with a ‘forked tongue’.

### **Swazi PM Tightens Grip on Cabinet**

*17 October 2011*

David Matse, the Swaziland Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, has now officially been sacked from the Swazi Government.

He was ‘suspended’ three weeks ago after he refused to sign a letter sacking High Court Judge Thomas Masuku. Masuku has been the centre of a judicial crisis in Swaziland where lawyers have been boycotting the courts for 10 weeks in his support of Masuku.

Masuku has refused to be bullied by Michael Ramodibedi, the Swaziland Chief Justice, and has been outspoken in the defence of an independent judiciary in the kingdom, ruled by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa’s last absolute monarch.

Matse is replaced in the Swazi cabinet by Chief Mgwagwa Gamedze. Barnabas Dlamini, the kingdom’s illegally-appointed Prime Minister, went on state radio to say that the position of Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs had to be held by someone who ‘knows how to work with the powers that be’.

Also sacked from the Cabinet is Information and Communication Technology Minister, Nleliswe Songwe. She has been in the news recently for her refusal to support the Prime Minister who wanted her to break the law in a dispute over which company should provide phones in Swaziland.

Lutfo Dlamini has been demoted from Foreign Affairs to Labour and Social Security. Lutfo has been under a cloud since January 2011 when it was discovered that he had taken money from the Kuwati Royal family intended for King Mswati and kept it for himself. He was

saved from the sack by the Queen Mother, with whom he has been pursuing a close relationship.<sup>245</sup>

In a statement posted on its website today<sup>246</sup> (17 October 2011), the Swaziland Government stated the reshuffle changes ‘are aimed at revitalizing and re-engineering Government’s machinery to run with vigour and renewed strength toward realizing the major priorities of the Kingdom of eSwatini.

‘At present, the main focus of His Majesty’s Government is to find a lasting solution to the challenges currently faced by the country.’

There is no doubt that Swaziland is in deep trouble and is on the verge of bankruptcy, but it is unrealistic to believe that shuffling around the ministers who have failed to save Swaziland so far will make any difference.

A more likely reading of the reshuffle is that Prime Minister Dlamini has punished those ministers who have stood up to him and refused to be bullied. The changes may mean that he now has a tighter control over the government and what little dissent there has been from within cabinet will now be silenced.

### **Swazi Poor Have to Eat Animal Feed**

*18 October 2011*

After reports that destitute people with HIV in Swaziland are forced to eat cow dung to survive, here’s news that others are eating animal feed to stay alive.

The *Times of Swaziland* reports today (18 October 2011) that there is a serious food shortage in Siteki.

It features Esther Maseko, a 67-year-old widow who looks after five grandchildren. Two of her biological children and one of her daughters-in-law died from HIV/AIDS-related illnesses.

The *Times* reports, ‘Today she deals with more than her own failing health. She continues to look after her five grandchildren and, in this community, she is the second HIV-positive person to claim she does not get food parcels through the Ministry of Health’s Food by Prescription programme.’

Maseko is from the same community as Sophie Magagula, one of the people whose plight became the centre of international news attention. She was so poor she was forced to eat cow dung before she could take her ARV drugs for HIV.

The *Times* reports, ‘Maseko does not eat cow dung as her fellow villager Magagula does but she eats animal feed (umhhungu) with the five children in the event they have no proper food, and that happens often, she said.

<sup>245</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/01/swazi-king-ordered-lutfo-sacking.html>

<sup>246</sup> [http://www.gov.sz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=828:cabinet-reshuffle&catid=1:latest-news](http://www.gov.sz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=828:cabinet-reshuffle&catid=1:latest-news)

“I know people will think we are putting on an act when we say we have nothing to eat. We eat umhhungu because we have no choice. I am the second person in this village to talk about my impoverished life and what desperation has done to us,” the *Times* quotes Maseko saying.

The *Times* adds, ‘Maseko, if the statement by the officers from the Ministry of Health are anything to go by, should be getting food parcels from the Good Shepherd Hospital, but said she does not get any food parcels.

‘She repeated the words of another villager, who said the Food by Prescription programme benefits people with a low CD4 count.

“We don’t get food from the hospital. They said my condition has stabilised and, as a result, we don’t get food packages,” Maseko told the *Times*.

### **Ministers Go in Style as Poor Suffer**

*25 October 2011*

On the day it was revealed that ministers in the Swaziland Government are getting E16,000 each and every month in travel expenses comes news that the poorest and most vulnerable in the kingdom will lose farming grants.

The government says it doesn’t have the money to supply orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) and poor farmers with maize seeds as well as other implements this year.

But, seemingly it does have the money for the ministers and their cars.

The Minister of Agriculture Clement Dlamini blamed donors for the lack of funding, ignoring the fact that the government prioritises spending in the kingdom and prefers to spend on its own members rather than the poor.

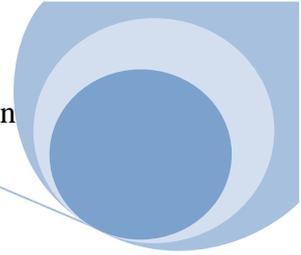
Dlamini said government had not received funding from the Global Fund through the National Emergency Relief Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA).

The *Swazi Observer* newspaper quotes him saying that he had no idea how many Swazi people would be affected by the cut, but it says there are about 200,000 OVC in the kingdom.

He said he did not know whether the grants would be available next year.

Meanwhile, it has been revealed that ministers get a car allowance of E16,171.92 – which is about three times the monthly salary of a teacher in Swaziland.

The *Times of Swaziland* said that a cabinet minister’s salary is E40,000 per month but with all of their allowances they end up getting close to E70,000.



## **Fear Over King's Mental health**

26 October 2011

In the week it was revealed that one in four people in Swaziland suffer from a mental illness, King Mswati says he has been contacted directly by God through a television remote control.

The King told a group of evangelical Christians at the weekend that he has seen a TV remote control unit fall from a table to the floor and through this action he knew that God was giving him a sign that he was ready to meet with him.

The African Eye News Service reports that when King Mswati preached at a prayer meeting at Lozitha Palace near Mbabane, Swaziland, on Saturday, he said God miraculously communicated with him.

Reverend Jonas Dlamini, one of the preachers at the event, is reported saying, 'The King preached to us. He was filled with the light of the Lord when he told us that God had given him a sign when he was getting ready to meet us. He said a TV remote on his table dropped to the floor with no one touching it and that is how he knew God was communicating with him.'

The *Times of Swaziland* confirmed that King Mswati told his audience about the 'miraculous' experience.

'His Majesty saw a miracle yesterday when he was preparing his sermon. The King said a remote control lay at the centre of a coffee table but something mysteriously brought it down.

'He said there was no person or wind that could have brought it down. The King said he realised that God was with him. It was Him who brought the remote control down,' reported the paper.

African Eye reports that Mswati and his Dlamini clan believe that they were chosen to rule Swaziland. His older brother, Prince Masitsela Dlamini, told African Eye that God had given the royal family authority to rule over other Swazi clans.

'The Dlaminis are closer to God,' said Dlamini.

Meanwhile, Psychiatric Centre Matron Phumelele Dlamini said during the launch of the mental health week, that one in four people in Swaziland suffered from mental illness.

She didn't mention the King, but gave a variety of examples of mental illness, including alcoholism and schizophrenia. One of the symptoms of schizophrenia is hearing voices that are not there which direct a person to act in a way they wouldn't otherwise do.

The Swaziland Solidarity Network in a statement was less circumspect. It said, 'This in scientific terms points to either the misuse of hallucinogens and narcotics or possibly an advanced state of schizophrenia. Just because we are opposed to the man's agenda does not mean that we should not be concerned for him as a human being, and we sincerely suggest that his family makes sure that he receives medical attention very urgently.'

## 13 November

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### **Police Block Church Vigil**

*1 November 2011*

The planned night vigil organised by labour unions was yesterday (1 November 2011) blocked by police from taking place.

The *Times of Swaziland* reports that executive members of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and the Swaziland Federation of Labour had to turn away disappointed after their efforts to stage a prayer at Mbabane Lutheran Church were shot down.

The confrontation took place between 9pm and 10pm.

Police led by Hhohho Regional Commander, Richard Mngome-zulu told the about 20 unionists gathered outside the church that such a meeting could perpetrate violence and they had to use their discretion to prevent it.

The unions said more than 250 police and correctional services officers blocked them.

### **Swaziland 'Can't Afford Human Rights'**

*3 November 2011*

The Swaziland Government says it cannot give its people their human rights because it doesn't have the money to pay for them.

And it blames the economic meltdown in the kingdom for this.

In an extraordinary claim it goes on to say that Swaziland has a 'small and vulnerable' economy that has been exposed to 'external shocks'. This it says, 'had historically diminished the ability of the government to efficiently underwrite some of the human rights that have financial implications'.

The government, handpicked by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, did not explain how, for example, abolishing the death penalty, stopping the corporal punishment of children and given women their rights would cost money for the government.

The excuse for not giving the Swazi people their human rights is contained in a report from the United Nations this week.

The report is an unedited draft of the findings of the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review into human rights in Swaziland. The review took place on 4 October 2011.

The claims are part of the Swaziland Government's response to criticisms made by a number of nations about Swaziland's poor record on human rights. Chief Mgwagwa Gamedze, then

acting (now confirmed) Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, headed the Swaziland delegation at the review.

During the review, nations lined up to point out the failing in Swaziland's human rights record.

Here are some of the comments published in the report.<sup>247</sup>

**Switzerland** 'expressed alarm by the many allegations of extra-judicial executions and tortures committed by the security forces and stated that victims should receive justice. It noted that there were no political parties because of existing restrictions and that there were few private media organisations.'

**Norway** expressed 'concern at the systematic violations of freedom of assembly and association in Swaziland, including by suppression of political parties. Norway expressed grave concern at the reports of forceful disruptions of peaceful marches, rallies and protests, including through the use of violence and arbitrary detention. It was alarmed at the extensive use of pre-trial detention, ill-treatments and alleged torture by police custody.'

**France** 'expressed concern at the use by authorities of the law [Suppression of Terrorism Act] 2008 on the repression of terrorism, to restrict freedom of expression'.

**China** noted there was 'still presence of gender inequality'.

**India** 'encouraged Swaziland to enhance women's empowerment'.

**Canada** 'expressed concern at the continuing ban of political parties and the lack of democratic space to exercise freedom of expression and association. Canada also expressed concern at the reports of excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions.'

**Hungary** stated, 'Swaziland retained the death penalty in its statute books. Also, freedom of assembly and association were severely restricted.'

**Ghana** 'noted the discriminatory practices against women persisting in Swaziland. It also noted the continuing allegations of arrest and detention following peaceful protest actions.'

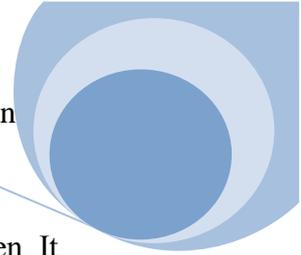
**Slovakia** noted 'that there were allegations of police employing interrogation methods contravening to constitutional provision. Slovakia expressed concern about reported restrictions concerning the freedom of expression such as the Proscribed Publications Act and the Suppression of Terrorism Act.'

**Australia** 'urged Swaziland to take steps to reduce the high rates of chronic malnutrition and mortality for children under-five; and to abolish the death penalty and corporal punishment. It expressed concerns about the over-crowding and poor conditions in prisons.'

**Germany** 'noted the restrictions in freedom of expression, in particular the Proscribed Publications Act.'

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<sup>247</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/71169263>



*Slovenia* ‘remained concerned about reports of discriminatory practices against women. It asked about the necessary measures taken to effectively ensure gender equality.’

*Brazil* ‘was concerned about the persistence of discrimination against women, and restrictions to civil and political rights. Brazil encouraged Swaziland to pursue constitutional reforms.’

The *United States* ‘requested how Swaziland planned to ensure protection of freedom of assembly, association and expression. It called on Swaziland to protect the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people.’

*Sweden* ‘noted that domestic legislation needed to be harmonised with the 2006 Constitution and the international human rights law. Sweden was concerned that the independence of the National Commission for Human Rights and Public Administration was questioned and its powers remained unclear.’

### **‘Popular’ Swazi PM Deludes Himself**

*13 November 2011*

Barnabas Dlamini, who was never elected Prime Minister of Swaziland, nor was he elected to the House of Assembly, says he will not resign because he is ‘still’ popular among the Swazi people.

The Prime Minister also says that he shouldn’t resign because he is presiding over a kingdom with a sound economy that is on the up.

Dlamini, who is clearly suffering from self-delusion, was responding to a question at a Swaziland editors’ forum.

He told the meeting on Thursday (10 November 2011), ‘We find that we are still on course and indicators are that the economy will pick up.’

To demonstrate the falsehood of this, the following day Fikisiwe Mabila, the Swaziland Acting Accountant General, issued a memo to announce that government salaries would not be paid in November.<sup>248</sup> At best they will be paid up to 15 days late. Although the memo did not state this, the reason is that the government has run out of money and has no way of getting the E350 million it needs in November to pay public service salaries.

Dlamini has been under increasing pressure in the past year from MPs who want to table a no-confidence motion in him,<sup>249</sup> from the media which have been calling for his head,<sup>250</sup> and from the Swazi public disgusted at the way he bought land for himself<sup>251</sup> belonging to the Swazi nation at a knock down price.

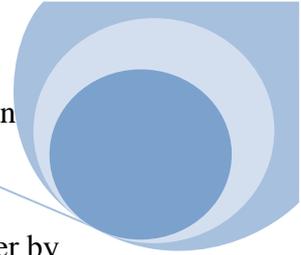
That doesn’t make him very ‘popular’ in my book.

<sup>248</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/11/panic-as-salaries-cut-news-leaks.html>

<sup>249</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/05/land-scam-treasonous-and-corrupt.html>

<sup>250</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2010/12/swazi-observer-plots-for-king.html>

<sup>251</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/06/pm-orders-media-silence-on-land.html>



Dlamini's 'popularity' has never been tested. In 2008 he was appointed Prime Minister by King Mswati III, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch, in contravention of the Swaziland Constitution.<sup>252</sup>

The Constitution says the Prime Minister must be a member of the House of assembly. Dlamini hadn't even been elected to the House. King Mswati appointed him there at the same time he made him Prime Minister.

### **No Rights for Gays, Says Justice Minister**

*14 November 2011*

Chief Mgwagwa Gamedze, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, says Swaziland will not give rights to gay people, because they don't exist in the kingdom.

Or, he concedes, if they do exist there are too few of them to worry about.

Gamedze was responding to criticism of Swaziland by a United Nations working group on human rights that said the kingdom should enact equality laws for GLBTI (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex) people.

He told the *Times Sunday* newspaper government would not recognise and legalise same-sex marriages because homosexuals either do not exist or form a minority in Swaziland.

The newspaper reported Gamedze saying it was hard to introduce rights for people who did not exist. If they existed, he said, they were very few – 'very very few'.

The newspaper reported Gamedze saying, 'It was difficult for government to formulate a policy on homosexuals or enact a law to recognise them because they actually formed a minority if ever they existed.'

The minister said the position of Swaziland on homosexuals was that 'the numbers do not permit us to start processing a policy'.

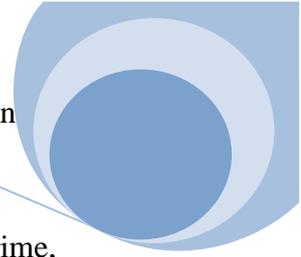
Gamedze's ignorance is breath-taking, because, of course, there is no state in the world where GLBTI people are in a majority, but that doesn't stop other countries, such as South Africa, enacting laws to ensure members of this community have their rights. In a democracy it is up to the majority to ensure that minorities have the same rights as everyone else.

Gamedze showed further ignorance when he told the *Times Sunday* that there was no GLBTI group in Swaziland that was asking for recognition. In fact one group called HOOP (House of Our Pride), had reported to the very same UN working group that had criticised the Swazi government.

HOOP had said GLBTI 'are hugely discriminated against in the Swazi community, as they are not recognized at community meetings and their points are often not minuted at these meetings nor are they allowed to take part in community services'.

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<sup>252</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2008/10/swazi-king-appoints-illegal-pm.html>



Police often ridicule GLBTI people if they report they have been victims of violent crime, HOOP reported

HOOP is calling on the Government to include GLBTI issues in its agenda to help to increase the acceptance of GLBTI, even at community levels in Swaziland.

Not everyone in Swaziland is as ignorant as Gamedze.

Muzi Mhlanga, the Secretary General of the Labour Coordinating Council (LCC), told the *Times Sunday* the kingdom's three main labour organisations backed human rights for GLBTI people.

He said that rights for gays and lesbians were discussed everywhere they attended conferences. He said the LGBTI community should not be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.

He said, 'We would definitely fight for a [union] member who has been fired or expelled from school or work on the basis of sexual orientation.'

### **We Have to Talk About the King**

*17 November 2011*

Musa Ndlangamandla, the editor-in-chief of the *Swazi Observer* newspapers, today lambasts the Swaziland Government for stifling the debate about the cause of the financial crisis the kingdom faces.

Ndlangamandla says there is 'a growing tendency by some in the echelons of power to go to all lengths to stifle public discourse and debate,' about the economy. He goes on to name Barnabas Dlamini, the Swazi Prime Minister, as one of those culprits.

Writing in the *Observer* today (17 November 2011) Ndlangamandla tells of a meeting of 'stakeholders' that was cancelled by the government. He writes, 'This collection of influence brokers in the country's economic, social and political strata would also have dissected our general spending patterns as a country to try and come up with answers and a way forward on the sad fact that despite the untold grinding poverty the country has faced in the past two decades, over 80% of the country's wealth is shared by a mere 10% - the privileged few.'

'This group, I suspect, would also have gone through government's bullet-holed and dog-eared balance sheet with a view to come up with realistic strategies to re-prioritise budgetary allocation.'

Maybe they would. And maybe they wouldn't. Who knows? because the meeting didn't take place.

But you can bet your last Rand that they wouldn't have mentioned the most privileged of 'the privileged few', King Mswati III, Sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The King has made no sacrifice during the present economic turmoil and no one in Swaziland – least of all Ndlangamandla and the *Observer*, the newspaper in effect owned by King Mswati himself, has publicly dared to point out the fact that the king and his family swill around in vast wealth while some of his subjects are so poor they have to eat cow dung before they can take their ARV medicines for HIV.

But last night a small crack appeared. Interviewed by the BBC World Service radio Joannes Mongardini, the Head of the IMF mission to Swaziland, was asked whether the King and his expenditure was an issue?

Mongardini is a born diplomat. Quietly, he responded, ‘The expenditure clearly poses a factor in transfers to His Majesty and in the context of a fiscal crisis we would expect all Swazis to make a sacrifice in order to reduce government spending,’ – which in diplomatic speak means ‘You Bet I Do.’

So, let’s not stifle the debate – let’s openly talk about the king, his wealth, and how as the most privileged of the few, he has sucked his kingdom dry.

And if Ndlangamandla wants to be taken seriously as a journalist and commentator on important Swazi national affairs let him start the debate in tomorrow’s *Swazi Observer*.

### **King’s Wife Thrown out of Palace**

*20 November 2011*

Inkhosikati LaDube, the 12th wife of Swaziland’s King Mswati III, who last year was involved in a love affair with a cabinet minister, has been kicked out of the royal palace following a fight with a security guard. She said she pepper-sprayed him in the eyes to protect herself.

The *Sunday Times* newspaper in South Africa reports today (20 November 2011), ‘Inkhosikati LaDube [also known as Nothando Dube] was ordered to “immediately leave the palace” by royal governor Timothy Mthethwa, who was accompanied by other senior members of the royal family’.

The news will not be published by the media in Swaziland because they have a long-standing agreement not to report on King Mswati without his permission.

The *Sunday Times* says LaDube, aged 23, told the newspaper she had had an argument with a security guard who refused to let her out of the palace last Saturday.

She wanted to take the youngest of her three children, aged two, to hospital after she had injured herself while playing - but the guard said she was not allowed to leave.

‘[He] threatened to hit me, saying I am not going anywhere with my child, who was bleeding from a deep wound,’ she told the newspaper.

LaDube says an altercation ensued and she was ‘physically prevented’ from leaving the palace. ‘I had to protect myself so I [pepper]-sprayed him in the eyes.’

The matter was reported to the Queen Mother, who, the *Sunday Times* reports, apparently decided that LaDube had been disrespectful and had to be kicked out.

‘I couldn't even take all my stuff, because they just said “you have to pack and leave now”,’ she said. Her children remain at the palace.

The *Sunday Times* is usually on sale in Swaziland so we shall have to see if copies are pulled from the shelves today.

After LaDube's love affair with the then Justice Minister Ndumiso Mamba was revealed in August 2010 by the *City Press*, another South African newspaper usually available in Swaziland, security forces were reportedly dispatched around the kingdom to buy up all copies.

### **Swazi King and Bestiality Ritual**

*28 November 2011*

King Mswati III of Swaziland is presently in seclusion taking part in the annual Incwala ceremony, described by many traditionalists as the ‘national prayer’ and considered by them to be the most sacred of Swazi ceremonies.

But what actually happens during Incwala is clouded in secrecy and many of the rituals have in the past been described by religious leaders in the kingdom as ‘unGodly’ and ‘unChristian’.

Now, an insider's account of what King Mswati really does during Incwala has been released.

It makes startling claims about King Mswati's activities. He is said to take ‘muti’ (narcotics), and allows himself to be licked all over his body by a snake while drugged. In one part of the sacred ceremony King Mswati has sexual intercourse with a drugged bull; in another he publicly has sex with two of his wives.

The accounts of goings-on at Incwala are given by Sithembiso Simelane who says his regiment initiation name is Sukulwenkhosi. He is 38 years old, born at Lwandle, near Manzini, and now lives at Nkhaba in the Hhohho region with his wife and two daughters.

He was a member of the Inyatsi regiment for about 10 years and says he ‘got to see all the evil that takes place in the royal residencies and more especially at Ludzidzini royal residence (Lobamba)’.

Simelane writes, ‘I'm telling you this story so as to reveal the reality that people in Swaziland do not know, and to warn Swazis against supporting this Incwala ceremony blindly. Many people have been killed in Swaziland for fear that they were witches or wizards. It is so amazing then because royalty, more especially the monarch, continues to practice witchcraft and at a very high rate.’

He goes on, ‘Now that the King has gone into seclusion, he will be stationed at Mantjolo (near Mbabane) where there is a spirit snake, known as *LaMlambo*, belonging to the Mnisi clan. There, he will have the snake lick him all over the body for many days. As the snake

licks him, the belief is that it cleans him of all the troubles he faced this year so that he emerges a new and strong person the next year.’

Simelane says, ‘Then there will be the catching and killing of the bull event. There are two sessions for this one. The first one is held at three in the afternoon a day before Incwala lenkhulu. The King expects the boys to show their strength by killing the bull with bare hands. They quickly jump onto the bull each with the hope of being the first one to grab it so that the King notices them.

‘The secret here is that these young men have the hope that if the King notices their bravery, they will get promotions in their respective jobs, especially if they are in the security forces, or if they are unemployed, they hope to get jobs in the army or the police. So they beat the bull with fists until it is so tired that it cannot do anything. Mswati believes that this action signifies that his people, as they always try by all means to rise against him, will suddenly decide to abandon that action and be confused by his muti.

‘The bull is then taken into the Inhlambelo where Mswati awaits it, naked. The young men hold down the bull tight as the king inserts his erect royal penis into the bull’s anus. He has sex with it until just before he ejaculates.’

Simelane also says that at one point King Mswati ‘moves out to *Indlunkhulu* where two of his wives, LaMatsebula and LaMotsa, await him naked and he has sex with both of them for a short while but then ejaculates into his horn (hence the saying *uchamela enkhomeni nakumuntfu*). These two wives, LaMatsebula and LaMotsa, only serve this purpose at the royal family. They are known as “Tesulelamsiti”, which basically means it is where the King cleanses himself and removing all his dirt on. On the two women is where Mswati leaves his demonic evils so that they carry it whilst he remains clean.’

# 14 December

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## **Now, Even the Holy Spirit is Seditious**

*1 December 2011*

A Swazi police officer has been suspended after she blurted out while in a spiritual trance that she wished for sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarchy to end, AFP news agency reported yesterday (30 November 2011).

Dumsile Khumalo, a junior police officer and pastor in the eastern town of Mliba, was at an inter-faith prayer service last Tuesday when she was heard speaking in a trance about the King Mswati III and prophesising that the Incwala ceremony, presently underway in Swaziland, would be the last one.

True to form, the *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper, censored its report on the incident today. It did not tell its readers that Khumalo prophesised the end of King Mswati's dictatorial rule, nor the end of Incwala. Instead, it simply said her remarks 'could be viewed as seditious'. It also did not name her.

AFP reported that senior religious leaders have been interviewed by police and Khumalo has been suspended from her job.

Khumalo was also ordered to appear before the traditional prime minister, Timothy Velabo (TV) Mtsetfwa, who will decide if she should be expelled from the police and exiled from her community for insulting King Mswati III, AFP reported.

The *Times* said that she was reported to authorities by other worshippers after she made her prophecy about the end of Incwala, the controversial ceremony considered by Swazi traditionalists to be the most important ritual in Swaziland. It is also the most secretive.

Some religious leaders have described it as 'unGodly' and 'unChristian'. This week a report on the Internet described details of some activities that take place at Incwala involving King Mswati and witchcraft.

The *Times* reported 'sources' saying the officer's prayer 'was reported to her authorities by other worshippers who did not take kindly to her request to God'.

It went on, 'Some of those in the gathering are police officers and they did not find it proper that one of their own was speaking in this manner.'

'When police officers and other state security officers take up office, they make an oath in which they pledge to protect the country, monarchy, citizens and tradition.'

The incident has raised concerns that 'spies' are now attending prayer meetings to take notes on what people might be saying about the King and his regime.

The *Times* reported that Sydney Nyembe, Secretary of the Concerned Church Leaders, said Swazis had a right to worship in whichever way they choose.

‘It is wrong for people to come to a prayer service to take notes. The officer said she was reported to her superiors by people who were at the prayer service,’ Nyembe said.

He said there was no way the officer could be blamed for her prayer because she said the words under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

‘The lady was speaking in tongues and she cannot exactly remember the things she said. We do not deny that she did say this but people should learn to go to church to worship and not to spy,’ Nyembe said.

Nyembe added, ‘We take what she said to be a prophecy. We see nothing wrong with that. She was under the Holy Spirit when she said those things and was not reading a speech, which would have shown that she had intended to say what she said.’

### **It’s Illegal to Possess Incwala Songs**

*2 December 2011*

A Swaziland man has been arrested for selling DVDs that include songs from the Incwala ceremony.

Timothy Sibandze, who is also a member of the banned People’s United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), is accused of ‘breaching cultural rules’.

Sibandze, who sells DVDs for a living, was also alleged to have copies of a DVD which included Siphon Jele, the man who died in state custody in 2010 after being arrested for wearing a PUDEMO T-shirt.<sup>253</sup>

The *Times of Swaziland* reported today (2 December 2011) that Sibandze also had DVDs of an ‘international documentary which prominently features Princess Sikhanyiso’. Once again the *Times* seems to be misleading its readers as this DVD is almost certainly the documentary **Without The King**, which includes testimony from a number of people in Swaziland who want to see King Mswati III’s reign as the last absolute monarch in sub-Saharan Africa come to an end.

Sibandze, described by the *Times* as a ‘former Political Commissar’ of PUDEMO was taken to Lobamba and then moved to the regional police headquarters.

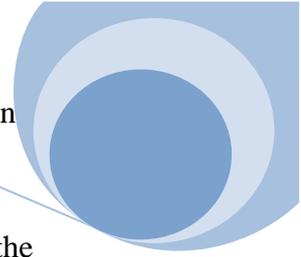
There are fears that Sibandze may have been targeted by police as no other person selling DVDs (and there are many on the streets in towns all over Swaziland) were arrested.

The *Times* reported he was released and told to report back to police with his parents and his chief, leading to speculation that he might face banishment from his home if convicted of the crime.

Police Public Relations Officer Superintendent Wendy Hleta told the *Times* the DVDs contained songs which were only supposed to be sung and broadcast during certain periods of the Incwala ceremony.

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<sup>253</sup> <http://swazimedia.blogspot.com/2011/03/levitating-jele-killed-himself.html>



The Incwala ceremony is taking place in Swaziland at present and King Mswati is at the centre of most of its rituals. Incwala is shrouded in secrecy and although called a 'national prayer' by its traditionalist supporters, it has been described as 'unGodly' and 'unChristian' by some religious leaders.

Incwala has received a 'bad press' this week. Yesterday, it was reported that a woman police officer had been suspended from her job and faces exile from her community after she prophesised the end of Incwala while she was 'speaking in tongues' at a prayer meeting. It is also reported she uttered words against the king while in her trance.

Earlier this week, a report circulated on the Internet from a witness to past Incwala ceremonies that detailed examples of witchcraft and bestiality involving King Mswati.

### **Clampdown on Incwala Publicity**

*14 December 2011*

The Incwala ritual in Swaziland is over for another year and King Mswati III has ridden a bull (either cowboy-style or doggy-style depending upon which report you want to believe).

We cannot be sure what really happens at Incwala because the Swazi traditionalists won't let us know.

They have gone to great lengths this year to stop people from knowing what is happening. A poor itinerant seller of pirate DVDs has felt the wrath of Swaziland's 'traditional prime minister' T. V. Mtetwa.

Timothy Sibandze, who makes a living out of selling DVDs, was taken in for questioning two weeks ago by the police and then taken to the Ludzidzini Royal Residence, for a grilling from Mtetwa.

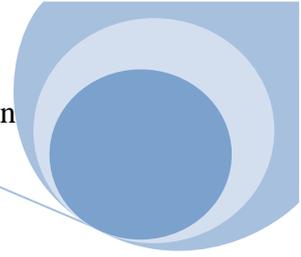
Sibandze had been accused of selling DVDs that included some footage from a past Incwala ceremony and this, according to Mtetwa, goes against Swazi culture.

Mtetwa ordered Sibandze, who is also an active member of the banned People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), to go find all the people he sold the DVDs to and get them back.

Since Sibandze sells his DVDs on the streets this is an impossible task and Mtetwa knows that. But that doesn't stop him threatening Sibandze. According to a report in the *Times of Swaziland*, Mtetwa has summoned Sibandze to another meeting where he is expected to bring the DVDs.

'He had better do so on his own because if people are to be instructed to fetch him then there will be trouble,' the newspaper quotes Mtetwa saying.

The clampdown is entirely on Mtetwa's initiative. No criminal case has been brought against Sibandze and any punishment he might ultimately receive rests with Mtetwa. An earlier report suggested Sibandze and his family could face banishment from his homestead.



Meanwhile, the search is on for a group of people who have printed and distributed pamphlets about Incwala. A police spokesperson told the *Swazi Observer* the pamphlets contained ‘malicious and misleading fabrications aimed at tarnishing the country’s customs and traditions’.

The spokesperson said, ‘It must be categorically stated that the people behind the printing and distributing of the spiteful material are grossly violating the laws of the country.’

Despite the police’s claim, it is unclear which laws exactly are being violated as the Swaziland Constitution (at least on paper) allows for freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

The *Observer* reported, ‘The police have not stated what was the malicious information contained in the pamphlets.’

Not for the first time the Swazi media simply take their word of the police that some outrage has been committed against the state.

I haven’t myself seen the pamphlets but it is being speculated that they contain the report from Sithembiso Simelane that was distributed on the Internet last month (November 2011) which detailed the witchcraft rituals that took place at Incwala.

The report also said that King Mswati took ‘muti’ at Incwala, and allowed himself to be licked all over his body by a snake while drugged. In one part of the sacred ceremony King Mswati has sexual intercourse with a drugged bull; in another he publicly has sex with two of his wives.

### **Swazi Police Shoot-to-kill, Again**

*14 December 2011*

Swazi police executed a suspect ‘cowboy style’ when they shot him in public, confirming fears that there is a ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy in Swaziland.

Police had previously warned the mother of the dead man to ‘budget for funeral expenses’ as they intended to remove him. He was said to be on a police ‘wanted list’.

Thabani Mafutha Dlamini, aged 27, was gunned down by police on 8 December 2011.

The *Swazi Observer* newspaper reported, ‘Sources said Thabani Mafutha Dlamini was executed cowboy style on Thursday in the presence of his colleagues and homeboys.’

It added, ‘police are accused of allegedly “advising” Dlamini’s mother to budget for funeral expenses as they considered him as a troublesome person in the area, who needed to be removed’.

The *Observer* reported sources said police officers unexpectedly swooped in on Dlamini at a local shop; Mvungeni Grocery, at Nkwalini in Hlatikulu where he was whiling away time with his friends and homeboys.

‘They said when he attempted to flee it was too late as three officers were already waiting at strategic points. Sources said Dlamini was apprehended in just a few seconds but he managed to slip out of the officers’ grip and took to his heels.

‘This supposedly sealed his fate as the few paces he took were enough to prompt the officers to fire three gunshots in his direction. It was said that one bullet that went through his back was enough to see Dlamini staggering and later dropping dead. The witnesses said he was left unconscious on the ground before being whisked by the same police officers to the Hlatikhulu Government Hospital, where he was certified dead on arrival.’

Dlamini was unarmed. It is unclear what crimes Dlamini is alleged to have committed, the *Observer* reported.

The *Observer* added, ‘The gunning down of Dlamini has sparked anger not only from his family but also a number of residents, who were calling for a probe to establish if it was necessary for the trigger happy police officers to kill him.’

### **Trouble and Strife for Swazi King**

*16 December 2011*

Swaziland’s King Mswati III is confronting a revolt as three of his 13 queens have abandoned the palace since he took the throne in 1986.

And more of his queens are trying to break out of the palace, according to a report in *Independent Newspapers, South Africa*.<sup>254</sup>

A royal source says some of the queens are frustrated as the king has allowed many months to pass without “visiting” them. They accuse him of seeking his pleasures outside the palace instead.

This comes after revelations about the recent unceremonious departure from the palace of LaDube, the King’s estranged 12th wife, after she had been accused of having a relationship with former minister of justice and constitutional affairs Ndumiso Mamba. To make matters worse, Mamba was the King’s business confidant and friend.

After the affair came to the King’s attention, he denied LaDube conjugal rights, according to insiders. They say he was trying to make palace life intolerable for her so that she would leave.

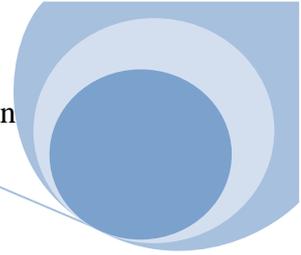
She is officially no longer part of the royal family and has been dumped at her maternal grandmother’s home in Hhohho.

She has been separated from her children, the youngest being two years. She has no food and the house she was dumped in has no bedding.

LaDube was the third of Mswati’s wives to leave the palace.

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<sup>254</sup> <http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/swazi-royal-family-in-sordid-disarray-1.1198842>



She followed LaMagwaza and LaHwala, who both now live in South Africa.

LaMagwaza was accused of having a steamy sexual relationship with a South African toy boy. Sources claimed that she was sex starved, as the king would not visit her.

At the height of the sex scandal, she was granted permission to visit her family home at Mbekelweni in central Swaziland and never returned. She is reported to be living a prosperous life after marrying an SA tycoon with whom she has a child.

LaHwala was also neglected by the King who would deny her conjugal rights for six months at a time.

Her uncle and guardian, Simon Noge, made a special request to the King for her to visit South Africa. She never returned. She is reportedly struggling, but one source said the palace was planning build her a house in South Africa since she has royal children.

### ***Times* Censors Royal Aide Report**

*22 December 2011*

The *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only 'independent' daily newspaper, is self-censoring again.

It runs a report today (22 December 2011) that a royal aide has been fined five cattle and banned from royal households for 'handling a certain matter' without first consulting traditional prime minister TV Mtetwa first.

The *Times* doesn't name the female aide, nor does it say what she is alleged to have done.

But the newspaper says, 'The *Times* Investigations Department' (whatever that is) 'has been reliably informed that the aide was summoned to Ludzidzini royal residence three times before the beginning of the Little Incwala'.

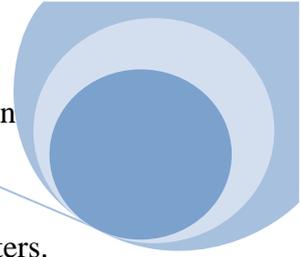
It says, 'The case was eventually concluded on Friday, November 18, 2011 when the aide was told of the fine and the ban.'

So the *Times* left its readers in a fog. But some Swazis are asking, could this be the same story that the truly-independent *Swazi Mirror* ran about Inkhosikati LaDube, the 12th wife of King Mswati III, who was last month (November 2011) chucked out of the royal palace by Mtetwa and his henchmen?

The *Mirror* reported that LaDube sent an aide to the Ministry of Home Affairs to arrange for her name to be changed to Nonthando Moosa.

LaDube came to international media attention (but the news was censored in Swaziland) in August 2010 when she was discovered in a sexual affair with Ndumiso Mamba, the then Justice Minister.

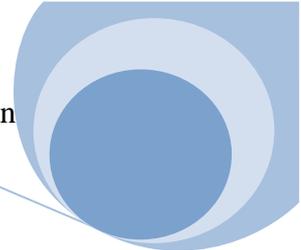
Meanwhile, the *Times* report unwittingly gives an insight into what it's really like for women in Swaziland. They have no standing on their own and are the subjects of their male relatives.



The *Times* reports the female royal aide was told she had to attend at police headquarters. The newspaper quotes her saying, ‘When I got there he told me that he had been sent by TV Mtetwa to take me to Ludzidzini. When we got there I found Mtetwa and Bheki Dlamini who told me the reason I had been summoned. They asked for my relatives and I told them my brother was Chief Mvimbi. I was told to come with him the following day.’

She said on the next day her brother told Mtetwa and Dlamini that she was now a married person and therefore her matter had to be tackled by her husband.

The aide said, ‘We were then told to come on the following day again, with my husband this time. Indeed, I came with my husband, brother and other relatives. That was when Mtetwa told us of the fine and that I was not to be seen within royal households anymore. This was done without affording any of us a chance to give our side of the story.’



## Other Publications from Richard Rooney

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The following publications about media in Swaziland are available free-of-charge online.

2008. The New Swaziland Constitution and its Impact on Media Freedom, Global Media Journal, Africa Edition, Vol. 2. (Stellenbosch University, South Africa).  
<http://globalmedia.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/34>

2008. Swazi Newspapers and the ‘Muslim Threat’. Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research, Vol. 5. <http://www.sz.misa.org/images/stories/downloads/swazi%20journalism%20and%20muslims%20-%20rooney.pdf>

2008. The Existence of Censorship in Newsrooms in Swaziland, report prepared for Media Institute of Southern Africa. <http://www.sz.misa.org/images/stories/downloads/censorship.pdf>

2007. Suffer The Children – Reporting of Minors by the Swazi Press. Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research (Swaziland), Vol. 4.  
<http://www.sz.misa.org/images/stories/downloads/children%20and%20the%20swazi%20press%20-%20rooney.pdf>

2007. The Swazi Press and its Contribution to Good Governance, Global Media Journal – African Edition, Vol. 1. (Stellenbosch University, South Africa).  
<http://globalmedia.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/47>