

**SUMMARY REPORT**

# **SAPSN ESWATINI SOLIDARITY RALLY**

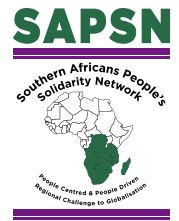
**2021**



FSEJ is the SAPSN focal point organisation in the Kingdom of Eswatini

SUMMARY REPORT

# SAPSN ESWATINI SOLIDARITY RALLY



01 July 2021

Over the past three days, footage circulating on social media showed people burning tires and barricading streets in the largest city, Manzini, and the central town of Matsapha. Reports coming from the country is that security forces set up roadblocks to prevent some vehicles from accessing the capital, Mbabane and they are using force and live ammunition as a way to deal with this situation. Activists are on the run and military soldiers who were deployed across Eswatini are doing door to door searches. Vulnerable groups are struggling to access food and others are fleeing to South Africa. Communication has been cut off and information is not easy to access. In light of the above SAPSN held a solidarity rally and engaged with people in Eswatini on the ground, the diaspora community as well as supporters and various groups in the region in order to find a collective way forward.

This Report summarizes the deliberations and conclusions of the meeting

**Sofonea Shale**, SAPSN Regional Coordinating Committee

As people on the ground, we have to give directions to our leaders. The way we look at our situation is not the same way they see it. What we feel they feel different. Our leaders have not been listening to the concerns of the people. Out of this meeting we want clear proposals and suggestions and what we can do to put our leaders under pressure to act now

The content of the situation is troubling indeed, people being killed, activist being hunted, people are flocking in South Africa because they can't find food.

Intervention is needed now. We must respond to the situation on the ground in a united manner. Whatever we agree to should change the situation of the people of Eswatini. Even if the king returns he cannot go back to his comfort zone. Transformation must be experienced in Eswatini. Let's be committed and do something even in our countries so that our leaders can be forced to act

**Reverend Zwanini Shabalala**, General Secretary, Church Council in Eswatini

Opened the meeting in a gracious word of Prayer. Thanked people in the Southern region and the international community for their support. Thanked the media mainly from South Africa for intensively covering the news of what is happening in Eswatini

## Outlining the Church's interventions

Churches have raised concerns as the Council of Southern Churches and have been following the events closely. They have never experienced the following in the country:

Protest started before what the world is seeing today, they were several petitions which were delivered in different constituencies of the country to the members of parliament and these were done peacefully and the government allowed that. The moment that the government stopped these we saw a change in the political landscape and things escalated quickly

The church engaged the politicians who are vocal about wanting change and they are also in the process of engaging them. They have also tried to meet the Political Party Assembly, but due to transport issues it has not been possible as well as disconnections from the internet and communication. The church managed to meet the former Prime Minister and aired their concerns and pledged support to the state in handling this situation in a peaceful manner. He appreciated this and as the church they are waiting for the Head of State to have meetings with his team so that they can get feedback

The church is ready to play the intermediary role

The Church is concerned about soldiers being deployed on the streets as this may cause chaos as they may respond harshly, there are reports that they are using violence by firing live ammunition and lives will be lost. The Church condemns violence and destruction of property which will cause more problems in the country.

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### **Dewa Mavhinga,** *Human Rights Watch*

Credible reports indicate the following aspects detrimental to the protection and promotion of human rights: police and army deployed; people being shot and killed; electricity blackouts; internet shut down; Activists in hiding; arbitrary and indiscriminate police beatings; fuel and food crisis; communication disruption etc.

There is an urgent need to support Activists in Eswatini and their call for improvements in the people's lives

South Africa put up a strong statement condemning the brutality against the people.

SADC needs to act quickly to protect the people and those using force must be held accountable. SADC must engage the Eswatini government. A publicly accountable SADC fact finding mission to the Kingdom of Eswatini, is urgently required to ensure that SADC interventions are done quickly and with proper and correct information

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### **Cebsile Mhlanga,** *(Teacher) on the ground in Eswatini*

Most people cannot get updates on the situation and are in the dark. They are hearing from media that soldiers are on the streets and beating people. People are angry and are showing their displeasure through various networks. The government is sending threats instead of engagement with the people

COMRADES on the ground are calling for intervention and are in need of support they want their situation to change. Workers are not paid people are suffering when the government is looting money and spending Billions and people are angry,

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## Phangie

As Swazi people in South Africa we often wonder what we can do to help. A practical suggestion is to call for the reversal of the Indian loan (fund) 1,6 Billion. We want to reject it as it will only be used to fund the government and its lavish lifestyle and it will not be used to improve the lives and conditions of the people

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## Pretty Mncube, ASC

We need to identify ways to get correct information from the ground in eSwatini. Particularly, how is the situation affecting women and children? We are also concerned about food security and safety as well for those flocking into South Africa

Is it the institution of monarchy that is the problem or it's the individual in power? Given the leadership and governance failures in non-monarchical democracies of Zimbabwe Mozambique and DRC. We must find a balance between Traditional leaders' structures and modern democratic institutions so that we can do what works for the people.

Let's not react when something happens. We need to have long lasting solutions. We need sustainable peace-building processes to achieve lasting peace.

Working in SILOS is contributing to our failure If we work together we can achieve a lot instead of repeating which has failed. However, the urgent priority must be to strengthen local forces on the ground to ensure that the people of Eswatini are capacitated to take charge of their own destiny.

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## Rev Paul Verryn, Methodist Church

The Church is committed to support people who have been violated and traumatized. We will mobilize safe places for fleeing people to stay so that they can regain their strength and recover. We have been in touch with Methodist ministers in Swaziland so that they can work with progressive organizations in South Africa to provide practical and psycho-social support in this situation.

### Practical Action points

1. We want the truth to be told as it is happening
  2. Consider people with disabilities as they are usually left out without help in this situation
  3. Action should consider vulnerable groups (elderly, women, children, people with Disabilities)
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## Cebsile Mhlanga (Teacher) on the ground in Eswatini

People in Eswatini need to be empowered to organize well. Political parties are banned but we need them to help us engage the king. People are being silenced and so people in Swazi should be free to join any of the political parties of choice. We are done with traditional structures that are suppressing us we need change.

Many progressive groups and leaders are operating under cover because of fear however they are doing something and have been very brave. We need to properly organize and work as a collective



We don't need loans because they are fattening the king's purse and not helping the people who are paying taxes

Connectivity must be restored as it hinders coordination and communication

## Contributions from the diaspora

If we can have open lines on roaming and load with airtime to ensure that communication continues, we need communication with comrades on the ground. We need to provide secure and reliable communication mechanisms.

Let's focus on political education and citizens must know how to respond infrastructure destruction is not good because these things will be needed even after this situation.

## Contribution from Rural women

Regional intervention is important from government but let's also have SCOs doing their fact finding so that we have truthful information as it can help us to organize and intervene accordingly.

## Cde Bongani Masuku

We need to organize Marches to the Eswatini embassies in our countries and send petitions listing all key demands

We need to mobilise practical measures and humanitarian interventions to support with medical, legal aid, students wanting to learn. We must form a humanitarian Taskforce from this rally and engagement to coordinate humanitarian interventions.

We need alternative media so that we convey correct messages in all the other countries

Consolidated funding must be organized so that people are clear and money is not squandered in the process

This is a strategic moment; the way forward will come from the Swazi themselves we need to be clear on demands and way forward. The rest of the world will follow on and support the needs of the people on the ground, let's put everyone and everything on the spotlight and people will act on the direction that we will give them as members of Eswatini

 @SapsnU  
 Corlette Letlo Jane Humanitarian aid  
 @Southern African People's Solidarity Network

We need verified and comprehensive information about where the vulnerable groups are and how we can

SAPSN is a membership-based network of national movements and people driven initiatives for social and economic justice in

We SADC region. The Crisis Committee in Zimbabwe chaired the Human Rights and Governance Assembly of SAPSN.

that of SADC they must help us, we must push them to support us even with SADC funding so that we can help the vulnerable groups. Let us identify countries that are

supporting us and work with them

We need to form proper structures that we can use to move forward so that we can organize well. The region is unstable and this needs to happen soon

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### **Linda Shongwe**

Applauded the Church intervention but questioned the silence of other church factions who are in bed with the government, can they also be engaged so that the church may have one strong voice. Intervention must be immediate but who can intervene now so that what is happening can be stopped immediately a speedy intervention is essential.

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### **Emmanuel Gasa**

Southern region people must come out of their comfort zones. Suggest a night of vigil in all countries in solidarity with the people of Eswatini

African bodies should speak up against violation of women's rights

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### **Yollander millin**

SADC must speedily intervene. Dialogues with leaders must take place especially in Mozambique and Eswatini to avoid people's continued suffering

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### **Blessing Vava,** Crisis in Zim Coalition

### **Consolidation and conclusion**

The return to democracy must be at the core of this transition.

SADC voices are missing in this conversation and we need SADC to provide direction and action in finding lasting solution to this crisis.

The army must return to the barracks

A Consolidated Fund is needed to support humanitarian needs and safeguard vulnerable groups. Civil Society must develop effective response structures and coordination mechanisms to organize cohesively at local, national, regional and international levels.

The church is critical and must continue to help local activists on the ground. The Church's diplomatic engagement efforts must be intensified in pursuit of a locally led national dialogue process with SADC support.

We need verified and updated information on the prevailing situation to inform our collective response. A fact-finding mission must therefore be sent to the ground to discover correct information on what is happening

There is need for proper leadership so that politicians do not hijack the situation. The message must be taken to SADC quickly

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