



LICINISO

WEEKLY

SWAZI TRUCK DRIVERS FIGHT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

Additional report by Lwazi Maseko



On 8 September 2022, the Swaziland Transport, Communication and Allied Workers Union (SWATCAWU), together with the Swazi Drivers Forum led workers to a petition delivery to truck company, Parsons Transport, in their Oshoek depo, north of Swaziland's capital city, Mbabane.

The protest followed the recent killing of a Swazi truck driver in the line of duty in South Africa.

The workers' demands followed the failure of leadership, as well as the company's refusal to engage with workers and the state of human and labour rights violations in the company.

Workers have been reporting ill-treatment in the sector, arbitrary dismissals, with workers not getting fair process before decisions are made on their lives, gross attacks on their dignity, underpayments, and other forms of exploitation. All these happen while the capitalist bosses laugh all the way to the bank with private profits.

The workers expressed the following demands:

- Cause for compensation of all Workers dismissed by your company, being Mr. Mdziniso Samkelo and Mr. Sibusiso Nxumalo, among others.
- Cause for commensurate compensation of all workers' dependents who were killed in their line of duty whilst under the instruction of your company, being Mr. Freddy Ntjingila, among others.
- Cause for payment of long service benefits of all



CPS National Organising Secretary, Simphiwe Dlamini, addressing workers during the protest.

Swazi workers under your employ from the date of engagement until they were commendably changed to be employed under your Swaziland company.

- Cause for fair and equal treatment of workers under your employ, regardless of race or nationality. This must include their rates of pay.
- Cause for compensation and or reimbursement of your workers for all fees you have charged them in respect of protective clothing. This was your obligation to do and at no cost to the workers.
- Cause for practical measures in ensuring that workers employed under your company are being provided with appropriate protective measures against xenophobic attacks whilst on duty.
- You are therefore demanded to deliver on the above six (6) demands within ten (10) days upon receipt of this memorandum. In doing so you are further called upon to engage with SWATCAWU (Swaziland Transport Communication and Allied Workers Union) and SDF (Swaziland Drivers' Forum).



Activists of the Communist Party of Swaziland leading in revolutionary songs and dances during the protest.

The Communist Party of Swaziland (CPS) supports the workers' struggles. The CPS took active part in the protest and offered its solidarity.

Amongst other Speakers was the CPS National Organizing Secretary Simphiwe Dlamini who elaborated lengthily about the role every worker should play in the campaign for Democracy Now.

"We are not here to sympathize with workers under Parsons Company, but we are here because we are all workers. Every individual has a task at hand that he/she needs to fulfil," he said

Continuing with his speech NOS backed his stance by urging all workers of the world to unite hence they have nothing to lose besides Chains.

"Let's us all dictate to the employers about how much we need for our labour and charge them per our interest. not allowing them to dictate on our labour."

Dlamini has also reminded all Comrades that the sole reason behind the burning of tinkhundla structures was a sign that the people are fed up with this system. So, let's isolate Mswati and his cronies before we plead with the internationals to isolate Tinkhundla.

Swazi workers are among the most underpaid in the Southern African region. The result of this extreme exploitation means that about 70 percent of the people of Swaziland now live below the poverty line.

Workers in Swaziland do not fully enjoy their rights, such as the rights to collective bargaining. The government, mirroring the former British colonial regime, always collaborates with the capitalists.

In addition, workers often have nowhere to take their matters since even the judiciary is under the absolute control of the monarch. This is due to the continued application of the April 12 proclamation which banned all political parties and activities. The proclamation also bestowed upon the monarch all executive, legislative and judicial powers.

The 2005 constitution of Swaziland was nothing but a restatement of the 1973 proclamation. The oppression of workers and the majority of the population has only deepened.

The people of Swaziland have in recent years stood up in their numbers and declared their demand for democracy. The "Democracy Now" campaign, launched by the CPS in 2019, has inspired the people across the country. Subsequently, the people have taken up the campaign and have declared that the type of revolutionary change means that the monarchy must be overthrown, but also that as the people we must fight against the ongoing imperialist control of our country.

DEMOCRACY NOW!

HOW LONG SHALL WE MOURN?

These are not natural deaths

On Sunday 18 September 2022, the people of Swaziland descended to Mafutseni community, about 30km east of Manzini City, to bear witness as the bowels of the earth swallowed yet another student who had died by suicide.

Simphiwe Saneliso Mkhathjwa (27) was a first-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Science programme at the University of Swaziland. His death was announced by the university administration on Wednesday 13 September 2022.

Mkhathjwa's death follows the death of another University of Swaziland student, Sphelile Mamba, by suicide at the beginning of July this year. He was also a Bachelor of Science student. In July, we also reported and analysed the death by suicide of Phephisa Madonsela, a first-year Information and Technology student from Limkokwing University of Creative Technology (LUCT) in the capital city. Download our analysis [HERE](#).

This year alone, there has been a worrying increase in the suicide of students in Swaziland, particularly at higher education level.

Suicides by students are linked to issues related to depression, which itself is rooted in the oppressive tinkhundla system of Swaziland which has overseen the deterioration of the people's living standards, the youth being the most directly affected.

Depression within the student community is thus related to the Swazi government's failure to provide free education for the people, and other related issues linked to poverty and inequality.

The government's perpetual failures have led to tarnished hopes and dreams for the youth. The root of the problem is thus tinkhundla capitalism, a system anchored in the absolute monarchy.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), in 2019 Swaziland had the third highest suicide rate per its 100,000 population in the world (29.4 percent). By September 2021, the country had its suicide mortality rate at 30.4 percent per its 100,000 population.

The Swazi government has done nothing about the matter except pay lip service. It has sought to pump more funds into the royal family and did nothing for both public health and education.

From 17 to 18 September 2022, a night vigil and funeral were held at Mkhathjwa's home in Mafutseni.

During the night vigil, the CPS gave its message of support to Mkhathjwa's family through the CPS National Organising Secretary, Comrade [Simphiwe Dlamini](#), and the head of the CPS Students and Youth Commis-

sion, Comrade [Bakhe Sacolo](#).

Comrade Simphiwe pointed out the need for everyone to play a role in the waging of a revolution in Swaziland; the young and old. He urged the Swazi youth to take the frontline in the struggle for freedom, democracy, and socialism in Swaziland.

Comrade Bakhe emphasised the importance of ending the root causes of all these societal ills that have engulfed the Swazi nation, including depression, poverty, violation of human rights, among others. He outrightly called for the absolute monarch, Mswati, and his government to fall.

Below we reproduce their summarised addresses during the night vigil.

Simphiwe Dlamini, CPS National Organising Secretary:

In the revolutionary struggle, we speak not only about political power but also economic power. We are saying the economy must be returned to us, the people, as we constitute the majority in society and are the major producing power. We are the ones producing this economy.

The time has come for all of us to play our role in the revolution. We will not succeed without everyone coming on board and playing their part.

Since these days there is so much talk about Swazi culture, we need to make things clear. We do not want an ignorant and oppressive culture. We need a progressive culture. The only culture we want must be based on science and knowledge.

See how the Mswati autocracy has just spent E100 million on *umhlanga* ritual within two weeks, but they cannot fund education, they cannot fund the country's future, they give no support to the children of this country. They do not care about an empowering culture of education based on scientific knowledge, but only fund a culture that reinforces the rule of the autocracy.

Every day we look at our children, we see the future, we see hope. But we have seen our own parents make major sacrifices for us to acquire education, yet today we are a burden to our parents. We carry qualification certificates, having qualified in higher education, but these certificates are not helpful to us. It is not our parents' fault but the government's.

It is the duty of the government to fund education as this economy has been produced by the people.

Students are a production force. They form part of the working class. In the various learning institutions, they are being trained to maximise production in the workplace, the wealth which will thereafter be confiscated by the capitalists and shared with the monarchy.

But this government, Mswati's government—a royal government—does not care about the people. It refuses to empower the children of our country. Because of its failures, many young people remain destitute and die in the saddest of ways.

This is why we keep saying that we need to fight harder to take our country back into our control and direction.

It is us who will determine our future, let us remember that.

But we will not be able to properly determine our future as long as the royal parasites exist in our midst, as long as they are in power.

Mswati's government, like a tick, only sucks our blood, exploits our productive power to feed the royal family's luxurious lifestyle.

We are not happy about what is going on in this country. As such, we need everyone to come on board.

No one should be a spectator in our liberation struggle. Everyone must have a role to play: the senior citizens, youth, students, people with disabilities, women.

It's enough! Let us bring a permanent solution to our problems. How long shall we cry? How long shall we mourn? How long shall we lament?

Let us bring a permanent solution to our problems. Our parents suffered under colonial and absolute-monarchy rule, beleaguered by poverty, and here we are, also suffering today. This cycle of oppression must stop! We are the ones to stop it.

In our communities, we need to begin to meet more and more, and also unite against oppression. We need to abolish tribute labour (to the chiefs and the monarchy) and focus on empowering ourselves and our own communities.

The deep exploitation of the people by chiefs and their headmen in the communities must be stopped by us, the people. The chiefs and their king routinely summon the people to work in their fields, while the people's fields in their homes are scarred by poor harvests.

We need to urgently form the security and the welfare councils in our communities.

The Security Council will focus on defending communities from state terror and all other forms of terror that afflict our communities.

Our communities must not have people who go to bed hungry. As such, the Welfare Council will focus on this, and other welfare needs of the communities.

We do not speak about socialism in the air. The socialism we speak about, we will build now. We begin now to build our future. Socialism is thus not a myth or pie in the sky but a reality we want to build with our own efforts here in Swaziland, here on earth.

Let us care for each other. The safety and security of your neighbour must also be yours, and vice versa.

Let us join together and discuss how we will, collectively, overthrow this tyrannical regime, democratically

rule our country, produce for the nation, and also equitably distribute the economy for the empowerment of all.

We see, therefore, that we cannot look at the issue of suicide without tracing its roots. We have to always go to the root of the matter if we are to have a better future. This also involves the myriad of crises that engulf the tinkhundla system, a capitalist system with feudalist elements.

Comrade Bakhe Sacolo:

For how long shall it be that we remain in this deep poverty? Every day of our lives we are always ready with our mourning gowns for the next death, unnecessary deaths.

How long shall we, week in week out, bury our young? How long shall we bury our children, our brothers, our sisters?

Parents raise their children with the hope that they will have a brighter future, a better life than the one they lived. But how will they get a brighter future under these conditions which create one crisis after another?

Every day we always wait for the worst to happen so that we can bury another innocent soul.

We, the poor, are always burying young people. But should things be like this? It is not natural! These are not natural deaths!

Out of destitution and despondence, some now say we must pretend not to see, look the other way, and pray that things will solve themselves out. Many, especially the elders of our country, have lost all hope that things will ever change for the better.

Despite the harsh difficulties he faced during his life, Simphiwe Mkhatjwa fought hard to better his life. He pushed himself to study and advance his life. But today his body lies cold in the coffin, his life ending prematurely.

Today we are here mourning the death of Simphiwe Mkhatjwa, but by the look of things, it is highly likely that very soon we will be visiting another family to mourn yet another terrible tragedy. This is the reality we face as the people of Swaziland.

Let us unite and fight against the system which keeps producing the cycle of poverty, inequality, depression and all the wrongs that come with this exploitative system.

Let us not just treat the symptoms. Let us go deeper to permanently solve our problems by removing the system which causes our problems. We must fight against all the elements that keep leading us to funerals of our loved ones and build one which leads us to a life of higher quality.

We must mourn no more!

We place our trust in you, students and youth, that you are the last generation to be oppressed. Let us unite for the total overthrow of this autocracy!

Download previous LICINISO Weekly [HERE](#)

Also, see how the people of Swaziland overwhelmingly boycotted Mswati's *umhlanga* ritual in [THIS](#) previous publication.



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