



SADC-CNGO

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THULANI MASEKO WAS NOT ONLY MARTYRED FOR HIS FAITH IN DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW BUT WAS COLD – BLOODEDLY MURDERED FOR HIS DEFIANCE AGAINST DRACONIAN LAWS AND ABUSE OF POWER BY THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY OF THE LAND

Sons and daughters of Africa, it is with deep sadness that the Southern Africa Development Community Council of Non-governmental Organisations (SADC – CNGO) received the tragic news of the untimely demise of Adv Thulani Maseko, the Chairperson of Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF), a well-known human rights activist and combatant defender for democracy in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

As SADC -CNGO, has been following events highlighting the volatility of the political landscape in the Kingdom, the untimely death of Adv Maseko on the 21st January 2023, where he was gunned down in cold blood by yet to be identified assassins, was precipitated by a series of incidents that involved abductions, torture and extra-judicial killings of pro-democracy activists who were voices of resistance to oppression by the state on innocent lives.

This untimely death of our comrade and compatriot is a culmination of incessant persecution he had endured over the years including when he was arrested in 2014 and sentenced to two years in prison. That arbitrary arrest followed the publication of his articles condemning political interference in the judiciary of the Kingdom. During his imprisonment, we learnt then that he was subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment, which were also characterised by solitary confinement deliberately inflicted with the purpose to instil fear in his resolve to fight for the liberation and democracy of the people of the Kingdom.

To our disappointment at the time, after our regional body SADC had implored authorities and the Head of State to engage role-players and stakeholders on national dialogue, the government had failed to demonstrate its commitment to the process called by the regional body. The government deliberately rebuffed efforts to chat the Kingdom on a new trajectory that embodies a true reassurance for protection and safety of citizens including civil society leadership who were representing progressive movements in the Kingdom.

It is in this regard, we believe, that the assassination of Adv Thulani Maseko is part of a well-orchestrated agenda by the state to systematically silence pro-democracy voices.

It is worth noting that this brutal assassination of the Adv Maseko is one the latest escalating incidents where public protestation for good governance are responded to by arbitrary arrests and detention of citizens, internet shutdown and blanket ban on political protests.

The political situation in Eswatini has reached boiling point that may culminate in further unnecessary loss of lives. In this regard, the SADC-CNGO call for the following to be immediately implemented in the Kingdom:

1. Setting up of an Independent commission of inquiry on the death of Advocate Thulani Maseko led by the regional body, SADC ;
2. An end to the intimidation, torture, and arrest of pro-democracy and human rights activists in Eswatini,
3. SADC to facilitate a multi-stakeholder dialogue for all pro-democracy and human rights forces in Eswatini and those who are in exile,
4. The Government of Eswatini must create conducive environment for civil society activism and broader political engagement on the future of the country as is enshrined in the regional and

continental instruments such as the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG)

We mourn the passing of this distinguished son of the soil, who has left indelible mark on defending human rights in the Kingdom and the entire region. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the entire bereaved family, especially his wife and children who witnessed an ordeal and the price paid by their father.

MAY THE ALMIGHTY GOD REST HIS SOUL IN ETERNAL PEACE

Aluta Continua!!!!

Monametsi Sokwe – SADC Council of NGOs Act Executive Director

For and on Behalf of SADC CNGO members and Exco