



# GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION FOR DEMOCRACY IN SWAZILAND 7 SEPTEMBER 2010

## Swaziland Democracy Campaign | SDC |

### Why the Swaziland Democracy Campaign?

The founding document of the SDC stated in bold terms the following assertion: "The eyes of ordinary Swazi people and the world are focussed on this historic, watershed initiative: the Swaziland Democracy Campaign [SDC] the reason being that the crime of *tinkhundla* oppression in Swaziland has persisted for far too long. Everywhere people are convinced that this initiative marks a decisive moment: the beginning of the end of the *tinkhundla* system. In this regard, everyone further recognises that the people in whose name this decisive struggle is being waged will always be at the centre of the process, the result of which will be the final defeat of the oppression and crime of royal supremacy in Swaziland."

Born of the organic struggles of the Swazi people and their genuine allies across the world, the SDC seeks to amplify the voices of the suffering, struggling people of Swaziland. The Campaign is the direct extension of the Swazi people's struggles into the global arena and only acts in their interests and under their political guidance.

The people of Swaziland live under conditions of extreme political repression: political activity is banned and the most basic of rights are denied. Arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, beatings, torture, disappearances, and even murders are part of the fabric of the repressive methods of the regime. In an attempt to justify their rule, the royal elite have stolen traditional Swazi culture from the people, and are instead used to instil fear and submission. Escalating levels of unemployment, poverty, and hunger prevail everywhere, compounded by alarming rates of HIV and other diseases associated with poverty.

Since 1973, the Swazi Monarchy has the dubious honour of maintaining the longest state of emergency anywhere in Africa, literally turning the country into an open-air prison controlled by a series of draconian laws. Every sphere of life in society has become militarised. The

notorious Suppression of Terrorism Act is but the latest indication that repression is to be extended even deeper. Despite these conditions within Swaziland there are many courageous, dignified people who are prepared to make common cause in their communities, their workplaces, their schools and colleges, and in their places of worship. They are prepared to unite and challenge the repression and the wastefulness of the royal elite. They are prepared to make sacrifices for the country they love; and it is to these brave and honourable people that we must reach out. We believe there must be no ambiguity about our *moral* duty to support those who are oppressed to resist and *struggle* for liberation, justice, and democracy



# Background to the Swaziland Democracy Campaign:

## What is the Swaziland Democracy Campaign?

Dating back to the dark days of apartheid, the sister peoples of Swaziland and their South African counterparts have always forged common cause against oppression, particularly given the context of the direct and open collaboration between the *tinkhundla* regime and its patrons: the then apartheid regime.

These seeds of collaboration and unity in struggle continued to be nourished beyond the defeat of apartheid in South Africa. They are premised on the clear belief that oppression anywhere is a threat to democracy everywhere. After obtaining democracy in South Africa, the workers and fighting masses of South Africa never forgot their historic duty to their neighbours. They thus recognise the Swazi struggle as an integral part of their own struggles, and central to the defence, consolidation, and advancement of the South African revolution itself. This led to numerous support initiatives: marches, border blockades, pickets, and raising the plight of the Swazi people in various international forums.

However there was recognition that not enough has been and is being done to make a decisive difference in the political landscape of Swaziland. Hence the decision was made to intensify coordination by all who are involved on both sides of the border. These efforts led to the birth of the Witbank and Johannesburg initiatives of COSATU

which were instrumental in bringing together both South African and Swazi organisations to develop common perspectives around heightening the momentum within and beyond the borders of Swaziland.

The trade union movement of Swaziland and South Africa, as well as the political and social movements of both countries, played an instrumental role in a variety of these initiatives. The most key endeavour was the effort by the trade union movement to coordinate a global campaign for the boycott of goods and businesses associated with the royal family, particularly targeting luxury goods. Also was the appeal for smart sanctions against the royal family in order to exert sufficient pressure for them to succumb to the call for change in the country. This momentum generated enormous global attention and drew in more trade unions to play their part. However this mission had to slow down for various reasons.

These initiatives gave birth to the Joint Swazi Action Campaign (JSAC) that tried to neatly interweave the activities inside and outside the country to maximise impact; The JSAC was particularly aimed at harnessing more forces globally to support the cause of the Swazi people and strengthen their fighting capacity on the ground. The consolidation of all these processes culminated in the colossal venture we are part of today: the Swaziland Democracy Campaign.

## The future belongs to those who claim and fight for it

The advent of the SDC is an expression of both the desire to be free by the Swazi people and the desire to stand in defence of justice and democracy by the South African people. It is a partnership of comrades and democrats on both sides of the border and across the world, ranged against enemies of progress and justice in our region and continent.

### This initiative aims to:

- Maximise the cooperation amongst and unity in struggle of all forces involved in the campaign for democracy in Swaziland both within and outside Swaziland
- Isolate the oppressive ruling regime [*tinkhundla*] of Swaziland inside and outside the country
- Raise the profile of the Swazi people's struggle for democracy, as well as mobilise all possible support for organisations acting on behalf of the suffering people of Swaziland

- Build a global movement for democracy along the lines of the former anti-apartheid movement

### The SDC was publicly launched in February 2010 and adopted the following key campaigning priorities as a guide:

- A Global Week of Action beginning on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010 with a series of built-in activities including: the Launch of the SDC Swaziland Chapter which was previously violently disrupted by the Swazi police; the highly successful Public Seminar on the real issues in Swaziland; and COSATU-led Mpumalanga Provincial activities
- The development of a Swaziland Information Bank where we shall continuously deposit and receive information about developments inside the country on a regular basis

- The establishment of a Swazi Democracy Fund
- A Global March for Democracy in Swaziland, otherwise known as the Swazi Democracy March [SDM], on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010 to coincide with the so-called independence celebrations to raise awareness of and popularise the struggle for democracy. This will involve people from all over the world in joining the Swazi people inside Swaziland for a historic march to give the world a taste of the reality faced by the Swazi people everyday. The SDM will include: fact-finding

missions, visits to various areas to assess the conditions in the country, and briefings. A huge global media contingent is expected to accompany the events

- The acceleration of a comprehensive boycott of luxury goods of the ruling class, the non-handling of items such as weapons by workers all over the world that are used to brutalise the Swazi people, isolation of members of the oppressive regime from schools and elsewhere where they are treated with privileged unlike ordinary people inside the country etc

# What is the GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION?

The Global Day of Action was adopted by the public launch of the SDC in February 2010; the SDC is the most representative forum bringing together all the key players involved in the Swazi question on both sides of the border to generate global focus on the deepening crisis in Swaziland and the need to move beyond words into action-for-change.

The Global Day of Action means that everyone everywhere must be involved in some form or other of action to raise awareness around the issues facing the people of Swaziland.

## Three forms of action expected across the world allowing individuals to choose that which is most appropriate for them:

- Joining the main Global March and related events taking place inside Swaziland [exact locations are to be announced by SDC Swaziland Chapter];
- Organising a march to the Swazi embassy or consulate in our respective countries [and where no such embassy or consulate exists marching to government offices] to raise the demands of the Swazi people; and
- Sending messages of solidarity and demand to the offices of the Swaziland Prime Minister and copying the same to the SDC.

Wherever possible, we are encouraged undertake all three actions; however any one of them would suffice. It is in this spirit that we say: on this day everyone should do something however small it may appear.

## Notwithstanding the above, the key elements of the programme are:

- Mass action in Swaziland between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September, the 7<sup>th</sup> September being the Global Day of Action with the whole world acting in solidarity with the struggling masses of Swaziland

- Following the launch of the Swazi government's visit programme, we have also developed our own routes for the visitors to get to know the real cold facts and to become familiar with unfamiliar sites and areas in Swaziland that the guided tours do not cover.

*These places include:*

- Vuvulane Irrigated Farms [VIF] and surrounding areas of extreme poverty
- Kamkhweli and Macetjeni villages that were mowed down by royal forces and evicted families out of the country
- Public hospitals which have become sites of silent genocide and everlasting pain for the poor who cannot afford private health while the royal family has built its own classic state-of-the-art private health institution and have regular access to international, particularly South African, health services
- Where there are victims of poverty, HIV&AIDS, and the deepening unemployment crisis who need our care, support, and practical solidarity: their side of the story is always hidden and it is the time for tourists to know and hear them, too
- SAPPI and SATELLITE: Street Vendors
- Fact-finding mission to raise international awareness and profile the issues of the Swazi people
- Public launch of a series of activities building up to the Global Day of Action, with a National Defiance Campaign as one activity: others activities will be publicly announced as appropriate.

# What can YOU do to support the SDC?

New ideas around how best to popularise the Global Day of Action, encourage others to action, and inspire more people to join the cause are welcome. Meanwhile the various activities already mentioned would benefit from every individual and organisation opting to play their part in doing something that will either result in others taking action or lending support to what has already been planned.

We must organise Swazi Democracy Action Committees to prepare and organise these activities in our own areas and locals. However what we encourage even more is that we do all within our powers to ensure that everyone is able to go into Swaziland to render practical support on the Global Day of Action: it's a one-in-a-lifetime experience and all of us must treasure the historic nature of the moment.

## The following activities are encouraged:

- Organise public meetings and workshops that bring together all civil society organisations in our own countries to discuss the situation and developments in Swaziland
- Distribute leaflets and posters popularising the Global Day of Action, the demands of the Swazi people for multiparty democracy, and the call for an end to the brutal repression, and detention and killing of workers and activists by the ruling *tinkhundla* regime
- Organise marches and pickets in the build-up towards and during the Global Week of Action to demand action from our own government and civil society organisations in support of the Swazi people's demands
- Draft petitions and sign and submit these to our own parliamentarians and local councillors demanding action
- Boycott all goods and services to-and-from Swaziland during the Global Week of Action to exacerbate economic pressure against the ruling regime, hitting them where it matters the most: in their pockets.

- ▶ **Join the march and be part of change**
- ▶ **Spread the information about the march**
- ▶ **Defy the draconian laws of the Swazi regime**
- ▶ **Sign the petition calling for the unbanning of T-shirts in Swaziland**
- ▶ **Petition our government to call for the unbanning of political parties in Swaziland**

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