
PETITION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT

Delivered by: Eric Mduduzi 'Gawzela' Simelane
President, Swaziland Liberation Movement (SWALIMO)
On behalf of the Justice for Swaziland Campaign

1. Introduction

We, the undersigned members of the Justice for Swaziland Campaign, an alliance of political and civil society organizations advocating for democracy and human rights in the Kingdom of Swaziland (Eswatini), submit this petition to the United Kingdom Parliament through the Prime Minister's Office. This petition is made in recognition of the historic ties between the United Kingdom and Swaziland and in response to the grave human rights violations committed by the Swazi monarchy under King Mswati III.

2. Historical Context

Swaziland was a British protectorate from 1903 until its independence in 1968. The United Kingdom facilitated the creation of the Westminster Constitution, which established a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. However, in April 1973, King Sobhuza II unilaterally repealed the Westminster Constitution, dissolved Parliament, banned political parties, and instituted an absolute monarchy by royal decree.

The Swazi people were thereby denied the democratic governance framework envisioned during independence. The British Government, at the time of independence, explicitly refused to transfer the country to the Dlamini royal family as personal property, emphasizing that Swaziland was to be governed under a constitutional democracy. Yet, since 1973, the Dlamini monarchy has entrenched absolute rule in direct contradiction to the aspirations of the Swazi people and the spirit of the independence agreement.

3. Escalating Repression and Human Rights Violations

The situation in Swaziland has deteriorated dramatically in recent years. In 2021, the regime carried out a massacre of peaceful protesters demanding democratic reforms, killing dozens of citizens. Members of Parliament, Hon. Bacede Mabuza and Hon. Mthandeni Dube, were unlawfully arrested for expressing dissent. SWALIMO President, Eric Mdudu 'Gawzela' Simelane, who served alongside Mdudu 'Gawzela' Simelane, Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube as a Member of Parliament, was forced into exile after being targeted under the same warrant of arrest that led to their imprisonment, highlighting the systematic political persecution of pro-democracy leaders in Eswatini.

High-profile political assassinations have become a hallmark of the regime's crackdown. Among the victims are: Muzi Mmemba December (2022), Thulani Maseko (Jan 2023), and Bheka Magagula (October 2024). These killings are part of a broader campaign of intimidation, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, and systemic denial of basic freedoms.

4. The International Community's Response

Regional and global actors, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth, and the United Nations, have repeatedly called on King Mswati III to initiate an all-inclusive national dialogue. These calls have included demands for the release of imprisoned Members of Parliament and political detainees, the safe return of exiled activists, and conditions for genuine dialogue.

The United Nations Human Rights Council issued Resolution A/HRC/47/L.15 (2021) condemning human rights abuses in Eswatini. The Commonwealth Secretariat has also issued strong statements following the assassination of Thulani Maseko in 2023. In 2022 and 2023, UK MPs tabled questions urging stronger UK action on Eswatini.

5. Appeal to the United Kingdom Parliament

Given the United Kingdom's historic role in Swaziland's constitutional independence and its moral responsibility to defend democratic values, we appeal to the British Parliament to:

5.1 We respectfully urge the facilitation of the unconditional release of Eswatini Members of Parliament, Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube, who remain incarcerated under a 68-year sentence following politically motivated charges. Their arrest was executed under the same warrant issued for SWALIMO President, Eric Mduduzi 'Gawzela' Simelane, who narrowly escaped and sought refuge in exile in the United Kingdom. Their continued imprisonment undermines democratic principles, and we appeal for international support in advocating for their freedom and the restoration of political justice in Eswatini.

5.2 We respectfully urge the United Kingdom to employ diplomatic and political influence to encourage King Mswati III and his government to commit to an inclusive and transparent national dialogue process that embraces all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and those in exile, as a pathway toward lasting peace, democratic reform, and national reconciliation.

5.3 We appeal to the United Kingdom to consider the introduction of targeted sanctions—such as travel bans and asset freezes—against individuals within the Swazi royal elite and security establishment who are credibly implicated in serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and the suppression of political dissent. Such measures would send a clear message that impunity for systemic abuse will not be tolerated and that accountability is essential for restoring justice and the rule of law in Eswatini.

5.4 We respectfully request that the United Kingdom Parliament formally table the ongoing political and human rights crisis in the Kingdom of Eswatini for urgent debate, given its commitment to upholding democratic values, the rule of law, and international human rights obligations. This debate would provide a critical platform to examine the escalating violations, consider appropriate diplomatic responses, and reaffirm the UK's historical and moral responsibility in supporting democratic transition in Eswatini.

5.5 We respectfully call upon the United Kingdom, in collaboration with its diplomatic allies and international human rights partners, to support efforts in pursuing justice for the assassination of prominent human rights lawyer, *Thulani Rudolf Maseko*. His killing represents a grave violation of international human rights norms and democratic principles. We have credible reason to believe that this was a politically motivated, state-sponsored assassination, evidenced by the State's persistent unwillingness to investigate or hold anyone accountable, despite the capability shown in resolving other non-political cases. It is imperative that the Government of Eswatini is held to account, and that an independent, impartial investigation is undertaken to ensure truth, justice, and deterrence of future political killings.

6. Justice for Swaziland Campaign (A Coalition of the Willing)

The Justice for Swaziland Campaign represents a united front of pro-democracy organizations, trade unions, student movements, faith-based organizations, and exiled activists. SWALIMO, as a founding member, continues to advocate alongside the broader mass democratic movement and the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for a new democratic dispensation in Swaziland. We firmly believe that peacebuilding, not just peacekeeping, is the only viable solution.

7. Conclusion

This petition is an urgent plea for solidarity and decisive action. The United Kingdom has a moral and historical obligation to support the people of Swaziland in their quest for democracy, human rights, and justice. We urge the British Parliament to stand with us in

demanding accountability, the restoration of constitutional democracy, and the safeguarding of fundamental freedoms.

We submit this petition with the hope that the voices of the oppressed people of Swaziland will be heard and that justice will finally prevail.

Signed:

Eric Mduduzi 'Gawzela' Simelane

President, Swaziland Liberation Movement (SWALIMO)

Date:

Annex A: Documented Victims of Political Assassinations (2021–2025)

Muzi Mmema – killed in December 2022 for anti-monarchy activism.

Thulani Maseko – assassinated in January 2023, a renowned human rights lawyer.

Bheka Magagula – killed in October 2024 after exposing corruption.

Plus dozens of unnamed activists murdered or disappeared.

Annex B: Timeline of Key Events (1968–2025)

1968 – Independence from Britain; Westminster Constitution adopted.

1973 – King Sobhuza II repeals the Constitution; bans political parties.

1986 – King Mswati III ascends to the throne.

2011–2019 – Growing pro-democracy protests met with violent repression.

2021 – Massacre of protesters; arrest of MPs.

2022–2023 – International community condemns repression; Thulani Maseko assassinated.

2025 – Continued assassinations; Bheka Magagula killed.

Annex C: Endorsements from Civil Society and International Organizations

Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF)

Political Parties Assembly (PPA)

United Eswatini Diaspora (UED)

Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)

Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF)

Swazi Lives Matter Global Solidarity Movement
Amnesty International (Statements 2022, 2023)
Human Rights Watch (Reports 2021–2025)

Annex D: References

United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/47/L.15 (2021)
Commonwealth Secretariat Statements on Eswatini (2021, 2023)
UK House of Commons Written Questions (2022, 2023) regarding Eswatini
Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and CIVICUS reports on Eswatini