



COUNCIL OF SWAZILAND CHURCHES

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

2nd of July 2021

To All Media Houses

Council of Swaziland Churches Statement on the Current Crisis in Eswatini.

The Council of Swaziland Churches, is following with great concern the events that are unfolding in our country. The spate of violence taking place throughout the country and the damage to people's properties is concerning. The question lingering in one's mind is what is causing this and what could be the solution? This is due to the fact that every person wants to progress in life and therefore the current destruction being witnessed is not taking the country towards its goal.

What could be the cause? The Covid-19 that has affected the whole world disturbed the lives of many people to the extent that they lost their jobs, thus exacerbating the high levels of poverty already existing in the country. Non availability of job opportunities rendered the youth vulnerable and frustrated. This is due to the ailing economy in the country which was a problem even before the pandemic but was then made worse. The changes necessitated by the pandemic, such as the lockdowns did not make the situation better as we witnessed other social problems like gender based violence scaling up. Whilst all this was taking place there was also poor service delivery from government caused by amongst other challenges wrong prioritization. Whilst going through these frustrations, there was also the upsurge of law enforcement agencies' brutality against the people. This led to the loss of life. The suppression of or not considering some voices that were not in agreement with the status quo also caused frustrations which then manifest itself in the violence we are currently experiencing.

Currently we are experiencing high levels of violence from both the security forces and the protestors. Protestors have left behind a trail of destruction with properties vandalised or burnt, shops looted and some people injured. On the other hand the security forces have their own share in the violence where we are told of people who have been beaten, shot at or even killed by security forces. We are also hearing stories of people who have been abducted from their homes by security agents and relatives are still looking for them. Such violence has never been witnessed in the country and we are concerned that it will have a long term effect on the people of eSwatini.

What could be the solution to the obtaining conditions? No one could pinpoint what a solution could be to current problems. There is no one person who would have a solution to the current impasse. But a joint effort from all the people involved is necessary for the benefit of all. It is common cause or knowledge that dialogue is usually the best way of reaching compromise or solutions in most circumstances. It is also the general view that dialogue could give a better solution to the impasse. It is for that reason that as the Council of Swaziland Churches we plead with every one to bury the hatchet and come to the table for a negotiated solution to the problems. No one party has a monopoly of wisdom to solve the problems but different minds and views can give a better solution. Government should be willing to meaningfully engage with those who have or hold a different view. As the Council we have already presented a proposal for dialogue to government and believe that opening negotiations is as urgent as yesterday because the destruction we are witnessing cannot be allowed to go further. The council of Swaziland Churches remains available to try to negotiate with all parties to come to the negotiation table.

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Negotiations are a process. It is therefore recommended that everyone should exercise some restraint as we try to bring together the different stakeholders. The frustrations are understandable but acting on the frustrations will not bring the desired results. We therefore appeal to everyone to exercise caution and refrain from activities that have the potential to cause more damage and the loss of lives.

Signed by:

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