



To: Her Excellency, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, SADC Executive Secretary
From: Dr. Kenneth Mtata, Chairperson, Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
Subject: ESwatini Crisis Situation
Date: July 5, 2021

Dear Dr Tax,

1. Grace and peace to you and yours at a time of the ravaging Corona virus, that is taking its toll in this our region!
2. Your Excellency, we write on behalf of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa, (FOCCISA). This is a fellowship of Christian Councils of Churches in the SADC Region. This platform of churches facilitates consultation, networking and cooperation among the churches in the region. Together, these churches seek to support sustainable solutions to regional crises. We do this in recognition of the dignity of all people and in pursuit of holistic liberation, justice and reconciliation, inspired by the Gospel of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is from this motivation, moved by the tragic developments unfolding in eSwatini we send this communication to you.
3. Eswatini has for almost 50 years, been deprived what every country in the SADC region takes for granted, the right to vote for a government of choice; and the freedom of association that allows citizens to join political parties of their choice.
4. Information at our disposal is that citizens, under these restricted conditions, peacefully submitted affidavits to local government authorities, requesting for reforms. When these affidavits were ignored, the citizens protested in public spaces. During these protests, some protestors were involved in the damaging to property and destruction of livelihoods. This was met with lethal force from the security forces resulting in, at least 60 people reportedly, being killed.
5. In our judgement, maintenance of peace and order is the responsibility of the state through the police. Using soldiers to shoot citizens in cold blood is not acceptable. It invokes the words of the prophet Isaiah who speaks on God's behalf that, God "saw that there was no one and was shocked because there was no one to intervene" (Isaiah 59:16a). As the people of God, we can, like Cain, hear the blood of the dead crying and God asking, "where is your brother?" SADC has the obligation to make sure peace and justice is established in eSwatini.
6. FOCCISA was heartened to learn that the SADC organ for Politics, Defence and Security has visited eSwatini on a fact-finding mission. We assumed that such a fact-finding mission would have taken a duration long enough to allow for fuller consultation of the broadest sector of society to ascertain, objectively, the gravity and scope of the developments there. We were however disappointed to learn that the SADC delegation spent a single day, largely as guests of King Mswati III and his family members in government.
7. We are encouraged to hear that the SADC delegation will return to eSwatini, hopefully sooner than later. It is FOCCISA's hope that President of Botswana, H.E. President Mokgweetsi Masisi, the Organ's Chairperson, will ensure that the voices of ordinary people who have been submitting

petitions to the Government are heard. We humbly believe that it is only such an inclusive process that can lead to a lasting resolution in the current impasse. We also believe such an inclusive process will create the environment for a genuine National Dialogue towards a lasting solution of peace with justice. It is our hope that the SADC envoy's return to eSwatini will be made urgent in order to address this untenable situation. In the meantime, as a matter of urgency, we request that the SADC calls on the Royal Government of eSwatini to withdraw the military back to barracks and let police handle policing. Soldiers are essentially trained to kill and hence cannot manage public protests appropriately when and if they occur.

8. Your Excellency, the legitimacy of the SADC is at stake here. There is now growing perception in the region that the SADC is not living up to the dictates of its mandate but has now become a sanctuary to sanitize abuse of power and injustices perpetrated against the citizens in the interest of the political elites. The handling of the eSwatini case will serve to confirm or disapprove this public perception for the legitimacy of this regional institution. We, as the church pray for your boldness and faithfulness to the noble cause for which this august body was established, namely, "to achieve development, peace and security, and economic growth, to alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, *and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration, built on democratic principles and equitable and sustainable development.*"

May God's Grace and Peace be upon you as you provide leadership, counsel and execution of the SADC mandate to restore hope for the citizens of eSwatini in particular and for the whole region in general.

Yours Sincerely,

Chairperson of FOCCISA

REV DR KENNETH MTATA



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EMPOWERING CHURCHES FOR REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION (LUKE 4:18-19)