



COUNCIL OF SWAZILAND CHURCHES

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

STATEMENT ON GOING KILLINGS IN ESWATINI

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One of the shortest verse of the SiSwati version of the scripture, which is found in the book of Exodus chapter 20 is that "Ungabulali" (do not commit murder). It is just a clear commandment from the Creator and every person is expected to respect and obey that commandment. As Christians we accept what is written in the scripture. We are aware that even other religions including our traditional religions also provide for the protection of human life. Our earthly documents, beginning from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights down to the Constitution of this country at section 15, provides or confirms the sanctity of life.

If all these documents and commandments provide for the protection of human life, it baffles one as to why then are we witnessing the killing of other human beings with impunity? As the Council of Swaziland Churches, since June 2021, we have issued a number of statements condemning the killing of human beings. Such statements were made both in print and electronic media but the killings continue. What is most troubling to the mind is that every person in this country or every institution one engages with, they all agree that the killings have to stop. Why then are we continuing to witness the murders when everyone seems to agree that the killings should stop? Is it because people are no longer trustworthy that they say one thing yet they do the opposite?

One may argue that murder have always been happening in the country which is true. As the church we condemn any kind of murder. But what is more troublesome is what we see as systematic murder of certain individuals and it appears planned as it follows a certain trajectory. It started with the indiscriminate shootings and killings that happened in June 2021. It was followed by the murder of security officers and of late it is political activist. The latest being the murder of Thulani Rudolf Maseko. As the church we condemn in the strongest possible terms the killing of any person.

Maseko have been known as a person who expressed his views openly and were known by everyone. He was willing to engage with anyone holding a different view to his and he

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would not shy away from putting his views across. But in all that he was doing he never disrespected his opponents but would vigorously put his views across. We have heard him complain of the judiciary in the country, but he was always approaching the courts of this land to argue his cases, and we may add that most of those cases touched upon the lives of a group of Emaswati. He ended up being known as a human rights lawyer because most of his cases touched on human rights and he dedicated his time to that.

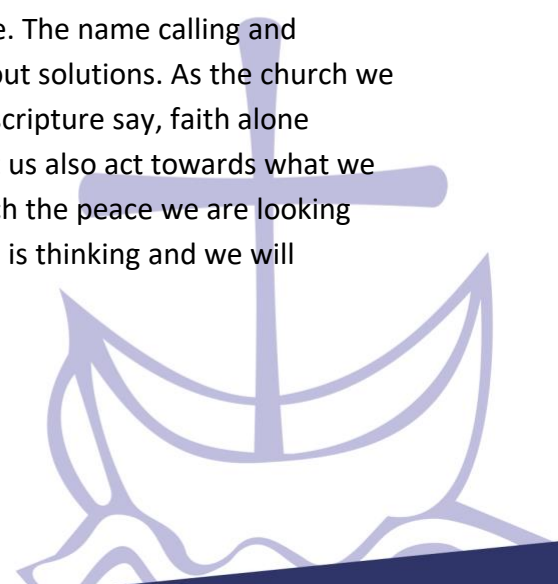
Maseko was known as a progressive minded person and he did not hide that. He also did not hide from taking leadership positions in most of the formations he was part of. Hence he was recognized even beyond this country boarder. It is because of him being a leader that the Council of Swaziland Churches mostly interacted with. He will always honor invitations of the Council to discuss certain issues. He would at times not agree with the position taken by the church but he always respected the views of the church. Each time an engagement will end with the views still not converging Maseko will urge the church to look into the issue and that there should be further engagements. He will not hold a grudge because of a differing view or then issue threats because of differing opinions. He believed in engagement than violence hence we are happy to hear government also mentioning that Maseko was not a violent man. This is because his run ins with the government are properly documented. But despite all those run ins, the government does confirm what we know that Maseko never issued threats nor became violent because of differing views. Maseko would always state when engaging the Council that he is a congregant of one of our member churches and he should always be treated as part of the Council and will ease whatever tension there would be as everyone would then laugh.

Violence from whoever will never be an answer. Instead violence begets violence and the chain of destruction never stops. The solution to differing views is nothing else than engagement with the view of getting a solution. We have as the Council mentioned in all our statements since June 2021 that the solutions to the problems of this country do not sit with one individual but it is with Emaswati. The only way of getting to those solutions and stop the destruction taking place in this country is through dialogue. The name calling and threats we see in the different media spaces will not bring about solutions. As the church we believe in prayer and we know prayer is powerful. But as the scripture say, faith alone without deeds is useless. Hence we believe that as we pray let us also act towards what we are praying for. Let us pray but also engage in dialogue to reach the peace we are looking for. Without dialogue we will not know what the other person is thinking and we will continue pointing fingers ending in violence.

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Our condolences to the Maseko family, our member church which Maseko was a congregant, the community, the country and the world. Condolences to his colleagues the Law Society of Swaziland and all the other groups and institutions to which Maseko was a leader. We hope that as we grieve, we reflect on these senseless killings and try to find ways to stop it.

Yours in Christ

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Chairperson

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