



PETITION FOR AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND LAWYER MASEKO THULANI

We, members of the African Human Rights Community, express our pain and outrage at the brazen murder of renowned human rights lawyer, Thulani Maseko who was gunned down at point blank range, in front of his wife and children at his home in Luhleko, Mbabane, on the evening of January 21, 2023. This atrocious and cold blooded act came a few hours after King Mswati had issued '[stern warnings](#)' to those calling for democratic reforms in the country, and that his hired mercenaries would deal with them.

At the time of his death, Thulani was a practicing lawyer, a senior member of Lawyers for Human Rights Swaziland, and chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, a convergence of various stakeholders calling for constitutional reforms in Eswatini. Thulani was one of the founding members of the Southern Africa Defenders Human Rights Network (SouthernDefenders). He contributed immensely to the promotion of justice and human rights not only in Eswatini but the Southern-African region.

We are deeply concerned that the killing of Thulani is a deliberate targeting and silencing of lawyer and human rights defender in direct retaliation for his work, as vocal advocates for respect for human rights and proponents of democratic reforms in Eswatini.

Since May 2021, the Kingdom of ESWATINI, one of the world's last remaining absolute monarch, has been [rocked by nationwide protests](#) in demand of democratic reforms, and an end to the excessive opulence of the Monarch in the face of one of the region's poorest economies. In response, the government of Eswatini, led by King Mswati III, has responded with excessive force against protesters, arbitrary arrests and detention, the shutdown of the internet and blanket bans on protests. More than 80 people have been killed, 200 plus injured, and thousands of others arrested and detained. Currently, [two Members of Parliament have been arbitrarily detained for 18 months](#), facing criminal prosecution under the Suppression of Terrorism Act in relation to the protests. Lawyers and judges are being harassed, threatened and intimidated for their real or suspected support of the ongoing pro-democracy movement.

Just last month, a human rights lawyer who narrowly escaped death after gunshots were fired at his car, was forced into exile like many others fearing for their lives have recently done.

As a human rights lawyer, Thulani worked tirelessly to advance democracy, rule of law and good governance in Eswatini. Thulani fought against the undermining of the independence of the Swazi judiciary, and the weaponization of the law and courts to restrict civic space, and crack down on legitimate opponents of the Mswati monarchy and its enablers. In 2014, he was arbitrarily arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to two years in prison, following the publication of opinion articles denouncing the lack of judicial independence. During his detention he was subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment, including being placed in solitary confinement as deliberate punishment for his publications which he continued from prison.

Throughout his life, Thulani remained steadfast in the fight for freedom and justice for the people of Eswatini. Many will attest that he persistently preached the message of peace and love. He spoke courageously against the injustices suffered by the people of Eswatini and paid the ultimate price with his life in this gruesome and callous murder.

We pay our respect to his memory, reassert our support for and uncompromising solidarity with people of Eswatini and wish to express our heartfelt condolences to his wife Tanele, their children, the Maseko family, and the human rights community in Eswatini, and Southern Africa. His courage and unwavering commitment to the principles of freedom, democracy, accountability and justice is a legacy that will endure and motivate the human rights community to continue to support these ideals for the people of Eswatini.

We urge the Eswatini government to:

1. Immediately allow for an internationally supported panel that will conduct thorough, independent and expeditious investigation into the circumstances of the killing of Thulani Maseko.
2. Release all political prisoners and refrain from the excessive use of force to disperse protestors and from the routine arbitrary arrests and killing of peaceful protestors and those expressing opposing views.
3. Immediately revoke the contracts and halt the policy and practice of the hiring of Private Military Companies to 'engage' protestors and pro-democracy activists, deeming them terrorists, and thus, 'legitimate targets' for elimination.
4. Immediately end the violent rhetoric against pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders.

Endorsed by the following civil society organizations:

Name of Organisation	Country
Raise The Young Foundation	Gambia
John I G	Ethiopia
Human Rights Institute of South Africa	South Africa
Action for Socio-political and Economic Change	Nigeria
Robert F Kennedy Human Rights	United States
Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition	Tanzania
Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations(CEHRO)	Ethiopia
NGO COALITION ON CHILD RIGHTS	Malawi
Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE)	United Kingdom
The West African Institute for Legal Aid (WAILA)	The Gambia
Independent	South Africa
Gloria	Kenya
The Center for Peace and Advocacy (CPA)	South Sudan
The Law Office of Dr Curtis FJ Doebbler	United States
Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation et le Suivi des Élections en Guinée - ROSE	Guinée
Sudan Human Rights Defenders Coalition (SudanDefenders)	Sudan
Club Humanitaire sans Frontières	République de Guinée
Defenders Coalition	Kenya
Caprec	Senegal
Article 19	Sénégal
Nyasa Rainbow Alliance	Malawi
Association Mauritanienne pour la Promotion des droits de l'homme AMPDH	Mauritanie
Reseau Nigerien des Defenseurs des Droits Humains (RNDDH)	Niger
Light For All	Uganda
Sexual Minorities Uganda	Uganda
ROADDH/WAHRDN	Togo covering West Africa
FIDA Cameroon	Cameroon
Defenders Coalition	Kenya
CISMAT-SL	Sierra Leone
United States International University-Africa	Kenya
Centre d'information et de documentation citoyennes (Cidoc)	Burkina Faso
Economic Justice Network Sierra Leonea	Sierra Leone
Southern Africa Litigation Centre	Botswana
Centre for Human Rights and Social Advancement (CEFSAN)	Nigeria
DefendDefenders	Uganda
FAMEDEV-Inter Africa Network for Women, Media, Gender and	Senegal

Development/Le Réseau Inter Africain Des Femmes, Médias, Genre et Développementt.	
Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA)	South Africa
Southern Africa Litigation Centre	South Africa
Forum des alternatives sud	maroc
DULLAH OMAR INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE	South Africa
HRAPF	Uganda
Ebou Sohna	United Kingdom
Center for Constitutional Governance	Uganda
Leadership initiative network for the Advancement of Women and Youth	The Gambia
Net Impact-The Gambia	Gambia
The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting The Health of Women and Children	Gambia
Women Human Rights Defenders Hub	Kenya
Seinoli Legal Centre	Lesotho
Lúcia da Silveira	Angola
KUTAKESA	Angola
CEMO	Mozambique
Independente Consultant	Angola
FORSC	BURUNDI
Women Human Rights Defenders Hub -The Hub	Kenya
Kenya Human Rights Commission	Kenya
Kenyans For Tax Justice Social Movement	Kenya
Fifef	Rd congo
Coalition Togolaise des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (CTDDH)	Togo
Women Collective Kenya	Kenya
Mohamed elkory diallo	Mauritanie
Swaziland RURAL WOMEN'S Assembly	Eswatini
Border center for support and consulting	Egypt
Collectif Senegalais des Africaines pour la Promotion de l'Education Relative a l'Environnement (COSAPERÉ)	Sénégal
Women collective Uganda	Uganda
Solidarity 2020 and Beyond	United States
Wcoz	Zimbabwe
Nyando social justice CBO	Kenya
PUDEMO	Swaziland
Tribeless Youth	Kenya
Human Rights	Eswatini
Kisumu Peace and Justice Centre	Kenya
Southern Africa Litigation Centre	Southern Africa

DefendDefenders	Uganda
Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria	South Africa
Organisation stratégies et développement	Mauritanie
Development Dynamics	Nigeria
Zimbabwe women lawyers association	zimbabwe
International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)	Uganda
Queer youth uganda	Uganda
SWALIMO	Swaziland
Freedom Movement Uganda	Uganda
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)	Senegal
World March of women	Kenya
Human Rights and Advocacy Network for Democracy (HAND)	Sudan
Ashina Mtsumi	Kenya
ARTICLE 19 East Africa	Kenya
Network of the independent Commission for Human rights in North Africa	Morocco
Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Sexuelles et Appui à la Promotion du Développement Durable "ALUCOVIS-APDD"	Burundi
ALUCOVIS-APDD	Burundi
Prison watch Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone
Association pour l'Education et la Santé de la Femme et de l'Enfant (AESFE)	Mauritanie
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights	United States
Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa	Cameroon
Rede Caboverdiana dos Defentores de Direitos Humanos - RECADDH	CABO VERDE
Droits de l'homme sans frontières	Tchad
African center for justice and peace studies	Sudan
Young Women Growing Kenya	Kenya
Club Humanitaire sans Frontières	Guinée
Nouvelle Génération de la Cinématographie Guinéenne	Guinée
Center for Women' Rights and Leadership	Gambia
Women Human Rights Defenders Hub	Kenya
Swedish Foundation for Human Rights	Sweden
South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network	South Sudan
Association Mauritanienne pour la Promotion des droits de l'homme AMPDH	Mauritanie
Ecosystem Social Economic Development Organisation	Kenya
Khulumani Support Group	South Africa
ONG RADDHO	Sénégal
Midpoint International	Nigeria
Civil liberties attorney	USA
Africa Watch	Morocco

Initiative pour la paix et la gouvernance locale(IPGL asbl)	Republique democratique du congo
Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation et le Suivi des Élections en Guinée - ROSE	Guinée
Centre de Formation en Mécanismes de Protection des Droits Humains (CFMPDH -ONG)	Bénin
Comite De Lutte Et D'Orientation Pour Les Droits D L'homme	Mauritanie
Prison Watch Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone
Organização para Desenvolvimento Integral da Família (ODIF)	Cabo Verde
Women educators association of Nigeria	Nigeria
Legal and Human Rights Centre	Tanzania
Kenya Human Rights Commission	Kenya
Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO)	Ethiopia
Integrated African Human Rights Foundation	Cameroon
Observatoire Burundais des Prisons	Burundi
Justice Access Point	Uganda
Protection International Africa	Regional
Moerike Consult	Italy
Reseau Nigerien des Defenseurs des Droits Humains (RNDDH)	Niger
Nonvilent Peaceforce	South Sudan
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHR)	zimbabwe
LaBAP	France - Côte d'Ivoire
La Voix des Sans Voix pour les Droits de l'Homme (VSV)	République Démocratique du Congo (RDCongo)
Independent	Kenya
Alliance pour la Culture et l'économie	Senegal
Association pour l'amélioration des droits et conditionnés de vies des prisonniers et migrants	Mauritanie
Lindo Nhaga	Guiné-Bissau
Avocats Sans Frontières Humanitaires Du Cameroun	Cameroon
Tadamon	Egypt
Je signe la pétition	Maroc
AU WATCH	The Gambia
Alliances for Africa	Nigeria
QTV Gambia	Gambia
End Impunity Organization	South Sudan
Action Jeunesse pour le Développement (AJED-Congo)	Congo Brazzaville

Coalition Climat pour la Biodiversité et le Développement (CCBD-Congo)	Congo Brazzaville
Alternative des Jeunes pour la préservation et la conservation des Ecosystèmes, de la Biodiversité et de l'Environnement pour le Développement Durable (AJEBEDD-Congo)	Congo Brazzaville
SOS IJM	RDC
Coalition Burkinabè des Défenseurs des Droits Humains CBDDH	Burkina Faso
Oil Watch Africa	Kenya
Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition	Tanzania
Self	Zimbabwe
Comité de Lutte et d'Orietation pour les Droits de l'homme	Mauritanie
Burundi Child Rights Coalition	Burundi
Rede Nacional dos Defensores dos Direitos Humanos na Guiné-Bissau	Guiné-Bissau
Centre For Rights Education and Awareness - CREAW	Kenya
Prison Watch Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone
Centre Against Gender Based Violence - CAGBV	Tanzania
TAAnet	Tanzania
Réadaptation à Base Communautaire pour les Personnes en Situation de Handicap en Mauritanie	Mauritanie
West Point Women for Health and Development Organization	Liberia
futurr rayonnant	موريتانيا
Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights	Zimbabwe
Association Mauritanienne pour l'Aide aux Enfants Pauvres	Mauritanie
Femmes et Droits Humains	Mali
University of The Gambia	The Gambia
Women's Advocacy and Communication Network (WANET)	Douala
African Francophone Coalitions for the ICC	Côte d'Ivoire
Réseau Equitas Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire
nanga	Angola
Family Rights Advancement And Protection (FRAP)	The Gambia
Free Lance Interpreter	Guinée-Bissau
Catholic University of Eastern Africa	Kenya
Child Protection Alliance	The Gambia
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE FORMATION EN DROITS HUMAINS ET DÉVELOPPEMENT	DR Congo