



Plenary sitting

B9-0138/2023

14.2.2023

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation of human rights defenders in Eswatini, notably the murder of Thulani Maseko
(2023/2551(RSP))

Katalin Cseh, Petras Auštrevičius, Malik Azmani, Nicola Beer, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Olivier Chastel, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Svenja Hahn, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Karen Melchior, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Urmas Paet, Dragoș Pîslaru, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Michal Šimečka, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Ramona Strugariu, Dragoș Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans
on behalf of the Renew Group

B9-0138/2023

European Parliament resolution on the situation of human rights defenders in Eswatini, notably the murder of Thulani Maseko (2023/2551(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - A. whereas a prominent human rights lawyer, opposition activist and former prisoner of conscience, Thulani Maseko, was unlawfully killed on 21 January 2023 through the window at his home just hours after King Mswati III made a veiled threat against members of the country's pro-democracy movement;
 - B. whereas a series of attacks has been carried out on opposition leaders and pro-democracy activists, all of whom have been challenging the monarch and demanding political reform in the country since May 2021, including through nationwide protests; whereas in response to the demonstrations, the government launched a brutal crackdown on human rights activism; whereas some politicians - including Members of Parliament - have been jailed merely for being suspected of joining calls for political reforms;
 - C. whereas the king of Eswatini's last absolute monarchy maintains that pro-democracy activists cause instability in the country;
 - D. whereas a militarized police unit of the king has repeatedly used excessive force, including firing live bullets into crowds, to break up sunset rallies; whereas the authorities detained, and allegedly tortured student union leaders;
 - E. whereas in November 2021 King Mswati agreed to a national dialogue facilitated by SADC; whereas Thulani Maseko was Chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, a coalition calling for constitutional reforms in Eswatini; whereas no progress was made so far;
1. Strongly condemns the murder of Thulani Maseko;
 2. Condemns attacks on opposition leaders and pro-democracy activists;
 3. Urges the authorities in Eswatini to allow for the establishment of an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into the killing of Maseko, as well as into the attacks against other pro-democracy activists since 2021, and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials;
 4. Urges the authorities in Eswatini to respect, promote and protect human rights, including freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly; calls on the authorities to allow the people of Eswatini to exercise their civil and political rights; calls on the authorities to ensure the safety of all human rights defenders, civil society actors and lawyers and to end the hostile narrative;

5. Urges the authorities of Eswatini to free all arbitrarily detained persons since May 2021;
6. Strongly condemns the excessive and continued use of force against peaceful protesters since May 2021;
7. Calls on the SADC to start mediation and to support the establishment of the national dialogue; calls on the authorities to initiate a meaningful and all-inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue that includes the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the authorities of Eswatini, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers and Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Pan-African Parliament;