

Stop Celebrating, Start Educating

16th April 2009

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) today held a party outside the Swazi High Commission in London to draw attention to the lavish celebrations planned for King Mswati III's 41st birthday this Sunday.

The action took place in solidarity with thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets of Manzini today.



ACTSA supporters call for free primary school education for Swaziland

The protest, which included a huge number of civil society organisations, including trade unions, called on the Swazi government to stop wasting a fortune on celebrations for the King's 41st birthday and to provide free primary school education. Protesters, who had travelled from all four regions of the country, assembled at Freedom Square before marching through the city.

Meanwhile in London ACTSA supporters held a mock birthday party outside the Swazi High Commission and presented a birthday card echoing the demands of Swazi civil society.

Commenting on the action Tony Dykes, Director of ACTSA, said: "ACTSA joins thousands of people in Swaziland in calling on King Mswati and his Government to put an end to the extravagant spending on these lavish celebrations and spend the country's resources on education and development. Free primary school education is a right enshrined in Swazi law, yet it is still denied by the Government. Through today's action and our campaign for democracy, rights and development for Swaziland we aim to open the world's eyes to the plight of the people of Swaziland, who continue to endure the longest running state of emergency in the world.

Last year thousands took to the streets in protest at the amount spent on the 40/40 festivities, which marked 40 years of independence and the King's 40th birthday. But in a country where 70% live below the poverty line, Mswati's Government claim there is not enough money to provide free primary education. The constitution of Swaziland requires the Government to provide free primary school education for every child. This has still not been implemented despite a court ruling ordering the Government to provide free primary school education.