

# Swaziland Democracy Campaign

## A Joint Swaziland-South Africa Campaign for Democracy in Swaziland

12/05/2010

**Swaziland: When murder still can't be enough to make the world roar in anger".**

### Press Release

The Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) takes this opportunity to note the growing global solidarity and messages of support from all over the world to the family, friends and comrades of the late Siphon Jele, who was murdered in cold blood by the Swazi police. Let us be clear, he was murdered because of his peaceful commitment to the struggle of the Swazi people and his banned political movement, PUDEMO, as well as his trade union federation, the SFTU.

We welcome more of the world to the reality of the situation facing the Swazi people on a daily basis. For a long time many have entertained the illusion of a peaceful and stable Swaziland ruled by a benevolent monarchy, which is deliberately spread by the ruling tinkhundla regime and some media institutions that refuse to expose the situation as it is.

The harsh reality is that the ruthless killing of our patriot and comrade, Siphon Jele was not accidental. We are certain that it will be shown to be a central part of a strategy to eliminate all forms of opposition to the system of oppression and greed. But it is also an indication of the growing resistance and willingness of the people to be mobilised. There is a new dawn of democracy being opened up in Swaziland from below. The people and their democratic organisations of civil society throughout the length and breadth of Swazi society are gathering momentum and confidence. In an act of desperation, when Mswati addressed his sycophants he made it clear that "akukhanywane", a term to describe the throttling of all those defying his oppressive rule is the strategy to be used. There is no doubt that the regime is on the defensive when it has to resort to such barbarism.

The systematic murder of political opponents in Swaziland has a long history dating back to the days of tinkhundla collaboration with apartheid rule in South Africa. It has intensified during the rule of Mswati with his war-cry phrase-mongering, including his 1989 call to traditional regiments to molest trade unions for being un-Swazi, particularly the public sector unions for going on a protracted strike in direct challenge to his failing government.

We intend to make these facts known to as many people as possible especially those visitors coming to South Africa for the FIFA World Cup. We want to urge all of those who were thinking of visiting Swaziland during that period that they are entering a country where the murder of democrats is sanctioned by the ruling elite.

The Swaziland Democracy Campaign inside Swaziland, and its chapters in South Africa and elsewhere, in honour of Comrade Jele and all those others before him who have paid the ultimate price for freedom, re-commits themselves to the struggle for a democratic Swaziland. Nothing less.

The May Day workers celebrations held at Salesian Play grounds in MANZINI, were violently interrupted by police who were insisting on the removal of all guests who were considered by them as not union members or workers. In this regard the police in their numbers disrupted the workers proceedings and manhandled officers of the unions including a member of the National Executive Committee of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, namely Simangele Mmema. It is reported that the police confiscated photographic equipment and deleted photographs etc. The union leadership has publicly protested about this harassment of workers and the unprovoked disruption of a peaceful function and they have appealed to the Swazi government to explain this intervention and assault upon the workers of Swaziland (SNAT Letter attached).

It was in the same situation where the former employee of Usuthu Pulp Company, a subsidiary of the SAPPI Group, was arrested by the police for wearing a T- shirt bearing the name of a political party, PUDEMO. The name of this young worker and patriotic activist is Siphso Stephen Jele. On his arrest the police took him to his home, where according to his aunt, Juliet Jele, the police searched the house and found nothing that could pose a danger to the State other than Jele's membership card to PUDEMO. He was made to pose showing off the PUDEMO membership card and the police took photographs of him before they took him away. Two days later the correctional services department makes the shocking announcement that Siphso Stephen Jele committed suicide in the toilet of a prison cell. Furthermore, a report emerged that the police were pressurizing Jele's family for a quick burial of this young lion.

This development has sent shock waves throughout Swaziland and is generating anger and desperation, that agents of the regime have become so drunk with power that they would needlessly end the life of this young man with impunity and his only crime is that of exercising the most basic freedom in human civilization, namely freedom of association.

The Times of Swaziland editor Mbongeni Mbingo wrote on 6 May 2010 that the death of Cde Siphso Jele is not just in strange circumstances but categorically places the burden on the regime to account, what happened and why. Do the police have anything to hide? If not why did they pressure the family to hurriedly bury the deceased? These are questions that many in Swaziland are asking. PUDEMO has condemned and dismissed the state suggestion of suicide and characterized the death as just cold blooded murder. The progressive movement and workers of Swaziland have also dismissed the suggestion of suicide and are calling for an independent judicial commission of inquiry into this horribly incident. The Swazi media is being flooded by angry letters of protest and anger, all asking the simple question why?

The Prime Minister of Swaziland in an obvious bid to contain the anger of the people and the scrutiny of international media has appointed a low level inquiry involving the police, the correctional service staff. In reality no one within civil society and political parties can trust the Swazi government and their security agencies to investigate themselves.

It should be pointed out that this death has occurred within an environment where the king as commander in chief of the security agencies has commanded that opponents of the Tinkhundla system should be throttled and extinguished. The Swazi Prime Minister is on Public record as out to implement the command of the king to throttle and extinguish life from the so called enemies of the system. Abekhanywe the Swazi king commanded. They have now done it and the comrade is dead and so are other activists being killed by the regime

As the SDC we maintain that the killings in Swaziland are systematic as mentioned above. The following statistics give a clearer picture of the political nature of these killings. The Jele issue is not at all in isolation.

Noxolo Mdluli, 22 January 1996- S student in Manzini

Percy Malinga, August 2003- A leader of PUDEMO in the rural Shiselweni region is shot 13 times in what police said was a failed hijacking. Nothing is taken from him but his life. The community apprehends one of the assailants and a few days he dies in custody!

Bheki Dlamini- A national organising secretary of the Nurses union and member of PUDEMO is attacked by "criminals" who take nothing from him, stabbed several times and recovers in a hospital in South Africa.

Mandlenkosi "Matausand"Ngubane, May 2004- is tortured and dies in police custody

Lafakudze, 29 December 2005- A wife to one of the detainees is abducted, tortured to death by Swazi police for not cooperating in giving details about the activities of her husband who is a PUDEMO member

Timothy Tsabedze- A Regional political Commissar of PUDEMO and a rural development and agricultural officer is attacked by "criminals" next to the royal head quarters in Lobamba. He is stabbed several times. Only his diary is taken from him. What criminals steal a diary?

Ntokozo Ngozo, August 2007- He was a former leader of the Swaziland Association of Students and the Swaziland Youth Congress which is the Youth wing of PUDEMO. With only under wears covering his body, with both hands in the air; he is shot several times at close range and is killed.

Dumsani Khoza- a former National Executive Committee member of PUDEMO is involved in a terrible car accident, sustaining fatal injuries. Instead of being taken to hospital police take him to custody. He dies a few days later

Vincent Dlamini, 1 January 2008 - PUDEMO national Commissar and current Deputy General Secretary of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions is shot at four times in what police say is a failed hijack. Two "criminals" are arrested and they are killed in custody.

Dr Gabriel Mkhumane, 3 April 2008- a former Deputy President of PUDEMO is shot dead in neighbouring South Africa after the Swazi police has gone to his mother several times to tell her that if he did not tell his son to stop this "PUDEM nonsense" he will come in a body bag. And he did.

Sbusiso Mashaya, May 2009- A trade unionist is shot and killed in what police say is a brawl in a bar. The killer is identified by police shot at close range. No case.

Mjomane Msibi, 16 June 2009- A PUDEMO member, who is organiser for the sugar belt is shot dead by police claiming he was running away from arrest.

Sipho Jele, 3 May 2010- A member of PUDEMO and the union SAPWU is abducted by police on Workers Day. Detained and after two days he is dies in custody in what police claim was suicide.

The world must denounce the Government of Swaziland and King Mswati III's handling of political activists and stifling of democracy. The killing of Cde Jele is one too many , we collectively must call on the government to account for this and other killings either inside jail or at the hands of security establishment..

The Swaziland Democracy Campaign will not rest until democracy is attained in Swaziland. We therefore commit to intensifying our Campaign for Democracy for and with the people of Swaziland. In South Africa we will protest the murder of Comrade Sipho Jele with a peaceful demonstration at the Consulate to coincide with the day of the funeral.

We will at all times expose the human and trade union rights violations taking place in Swaziland for the whole world to see Swaziland's ruling elite for exactly what it is, a political tyrant and dictatorship hell bent on destroying and humiliating its populace. We will escalate our campaign to include consistent media and publicity coverage, tapping on all progressive media organisations to inform and raise awareness on Swaziland political instability. We will seek to dispel all political myths about Swaziland being a peaceful country as we have shown in the paragraphs above. The highlight of our campaign, is a march on the 6<sup>th</sup> September to be led by all progressive formations inside Swaziland under the banner of Swaziland United Democratic Front. We will mobilize all progressive formations to be at strategic border gates and enter Swaziland with a call for Democracy Now.

A detailed programme for the events will be released soon. The SDC also calls all progressive movements to continue directing their energies towards the 6<sup>th</sup> September March inside Swaziland!  
Amandla!

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