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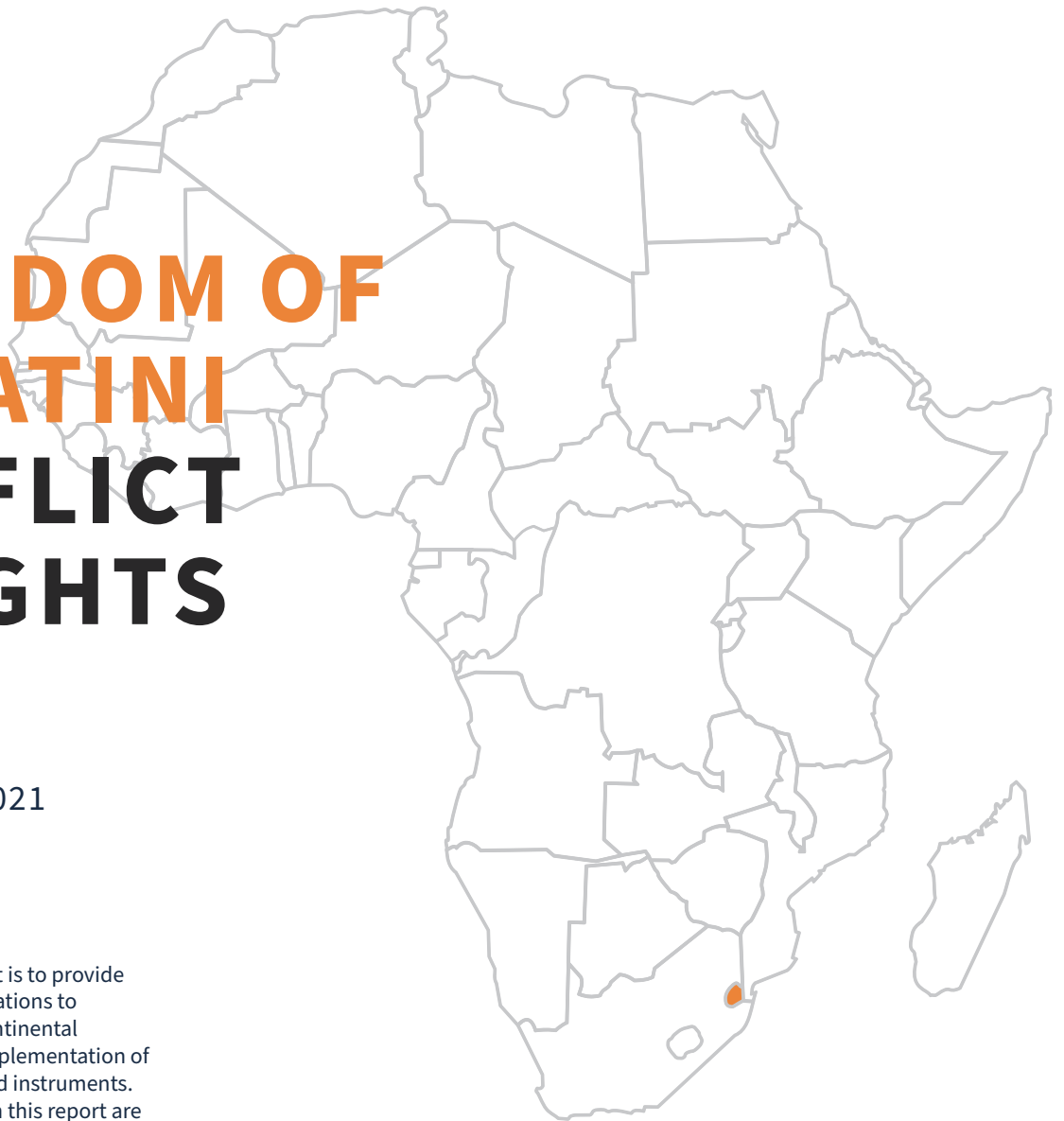
## PEACE & SECURITY REPORT

# KINGDOM OF ESWATINI CONFLICT INSIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2021

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to national, regional and continental decision makers in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments. The opinions expressed in this report are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies.

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# SITUATION ANALYSIS

**FIGURE 1. COUNTRY PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)</b>	<b>GDP PER CAPITA</b>
<b>1.14 M</b>	<b>INDEX: 0.611</b> <b>RANK: 138/189</b>	<b>\$3,415.5</b>
<b>NEIGHBOURS</b>	<b>LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YRS)</b>	<b>RECS</b>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> <b>MOZAMBIQUE</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>SADC</b> <b>COMESA</b>

Source: United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SWZ>

The Kingdom of Eswatini is a landlocked country in southern Africa that shares borders with South Africa and Mozambique. Despite its classification as a lower-middle income country, two-thirds of the population are poor with an unemployment rate of 40% and over 60% youth unemployment.<sup>1</sup> While Eswatini still has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world, there has been a significant decline in new infections.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Eswatini had achieved the UNAIDS global target of '90-90-90' by 2020 (90% of people living with HIV know their status, 90% of people who know their HIV-positive status are on treatment and 90% of people on treatment have suppressed viral load).<sup>3</sup>

Eswatini (Swaziland until 2018) was granted independence in 1968. After 5 years as a constitutional monarch, King Sobhuza II, on 12 April 1973, repealed Swaziland's independence constitution. The 12 April 1973 decree banned all political parties and introduced a 60-day detention without trial order.<sup>4</sup> Since then, the decree remains in effect, although the detention without trial order was subsumed by the 2005 Constitution. In 1991, King Sobhuza's successor, King Mswati III, gave into pressure from reformist traditionalists, liberals and the donor community for constitutional reform and,

in 2005, a Constitution was adopted that alluded to an era of accountable and transparent government. While the Constitution provides for a Bill of Rights in Section 25 including that "a person has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association"<sup>5</sup>, political parties remain banned and cannot participate in elections. The king remains as the highest authority with the powers to dissolve an elected parliament and veto bills.

The constitution's oversight role is ambiguous on the king's traditional personification as Ingwenyama,<sup>6</sup> whose discretionary powers to create and enforce customary law mean that the country continues to be governed by de facto royal decree. Eswatini has a dual legal system which is based on Roman Dutch Law and customary law which is based on Swazi Law. Swazi Law and Custom is the original indigenous legal system of the Swazi people, whilst Roman Dutch Law was introduced by colonialists. There are two court systems: Swazi national courts deal with issues of customary law whilst the magistrates' court, high court up to the supreme court exercise Roman Dutch Law.

1 WorldBank. Country Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/eswatini/overview#:~:text=Development%20challenges,%2C%20and%2069.0%25%20in%202001%202021>

2 Ibid

3 The Global Fund. Results Report (2020). [https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/10103/corporate\\_2020resultsreport\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/10103/corporate_2020resultsreport_report_en.pdf), p.15

4 Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April 1973

5 The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act 2005, Chapter III, Section 25 (1)

6 The Ingwenyama (lion) is the king in traditional matters.

# CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

## Political factors

Until the 2021 protests and some mass action in 1994, 1995 and 2011, protests in Eswatini were generally led by the various trade unions. While these union-led actions were often couched in calls for democratic reform, they were spurred on by issues relating to specific workers' conditions which became known as the "27 Demands" in 1994 and 1995. The 2021 protests deviated from this usual pattern: these were youth-led, looser and more fragmented in terms of leadership. The unclear circumstances surrounding the death of Thabani Nkomonye in May 2021 stoked the flames of disenfranchised and frustrated unemployed youth. Increasingly, emaSwati realized that the restricted political system compromised the effectiveness of government, civil society organizations and development partners in addressing the country's socio-economic problems.

## Socio-economic factors

Through the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Eswatini enjoys reasonable economic stability. The Union is a goods arrangement between five countries of Southern Africa - Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa - with a revenue sharing agreement that disproportionately distributes the revenue to member states. Essentially, small economies, like Eswatini and Lesotho, benefit from the customs revenue produced by its most powerful member, South Africa. Not only are SACU revenues key to Eswatini's economy, accounting for two-thirds of the country's economy, but it must also be considered how significantly SACU has contributed to regional stability.<sup>7</sup> Although Eswatini is classified as a lower middle-income country, it has high levels of income inequality with a Gini coefficient of 54.6 and is among the top 5 most unequal countries in the world.<sup>8</sup> Gender inequality is high with a Gender Inequality Index rating of 0.569<sup>9</sup>, very low representation of women in parliament (2 elected MPs in the current parliament), and high levels of gender-based violence.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the literacy rate among youth (aged 15 to 24 years) is high at 95%<sup>11</sup>, 60% of the

unemployed are categorized as youth.<sup>12</sup> The COVID-19 induced lockdowns further reduced opportunities for employment in the formal and informal sectors. While the state allocates youth development funds<sup>13</sup>, that seek to support entrepreneurship, the stringent conditionalities limit their reach and potential impact. The manufacturing sector which is concentrated in the industrial area of Matsapha was affected by lockdowns leading to mass retrenchments and reduced working hours. As schools were shut down, and blended learning strategies initiated, requiring learners to have access to radio, television and the internet, vulnerable families faced additional economic burdens further widening the inequality gap. As the country's economic outlook deteriorated, citizens began to tie broader socio-economic issues with the inadequacies of the Tinkhundla political system.

Eswatini ranks low on press freedom<sup>14</sup> and independent journalism have endured intimidation and even arrest. The daily newspapers, the Times of Eswatini and the Eswatini Observer, and broadcast media (radio and TV) are not perceived as impartial but state organs. Over the last two years, online media gained popularity, in particular Swaziland News, which is registered in South Africa and whose editor is a Swazi.<sup>15</sup> This is the first online paper whose explicit mission is "to provide accurate information that will enable citizens to make informed decisions regarding issues that affect their welfare, be it political, socially, economically or otherwise".<sup>16</sup> Since inception, the newspaper has reported on the monarchy's influence on the country's governance and economy. Its Facebook page had 144,000 followers as of end August 2021.

Over the years, social media has bridged the information divide and the "veil of secrecy" surrounding the daily lives of the Swazi monarchy. The displays of wealth and opulence shared by some members of the royal family on social media inadvertently affected public perception, heightening calls for democracy.

7 [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/eswatini/1980/eswatini-and-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/eswatini/1980/eswatini-and-eu_en)  
<https://www.tralac.org/blog/article/13806-what-is-a-customs-union-like-sacu-about.html>

8 World Bank's Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020 report

9 WFP (2019) Eswatini Country Strategic Plan 2020-2024. <https://www.wfp.org/operations/sz02-eswatini-country-strategic-plan-2020-2024>

10 UNISWA (2019) A Situation Analysis on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Eswatini, p.17

11 UNICEF Country Data 2019. <https://data.unicef.org/country/swz/>

12 WorldBank. 2021. Country Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/eswatini/overview#:~:text=Development%20challenges,%2C%20and%2069.0%25%20in%202001>

13 Eswatini Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF), a Category A Parastatal established by the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland in 2009. <https://www.yef.co.sz/>

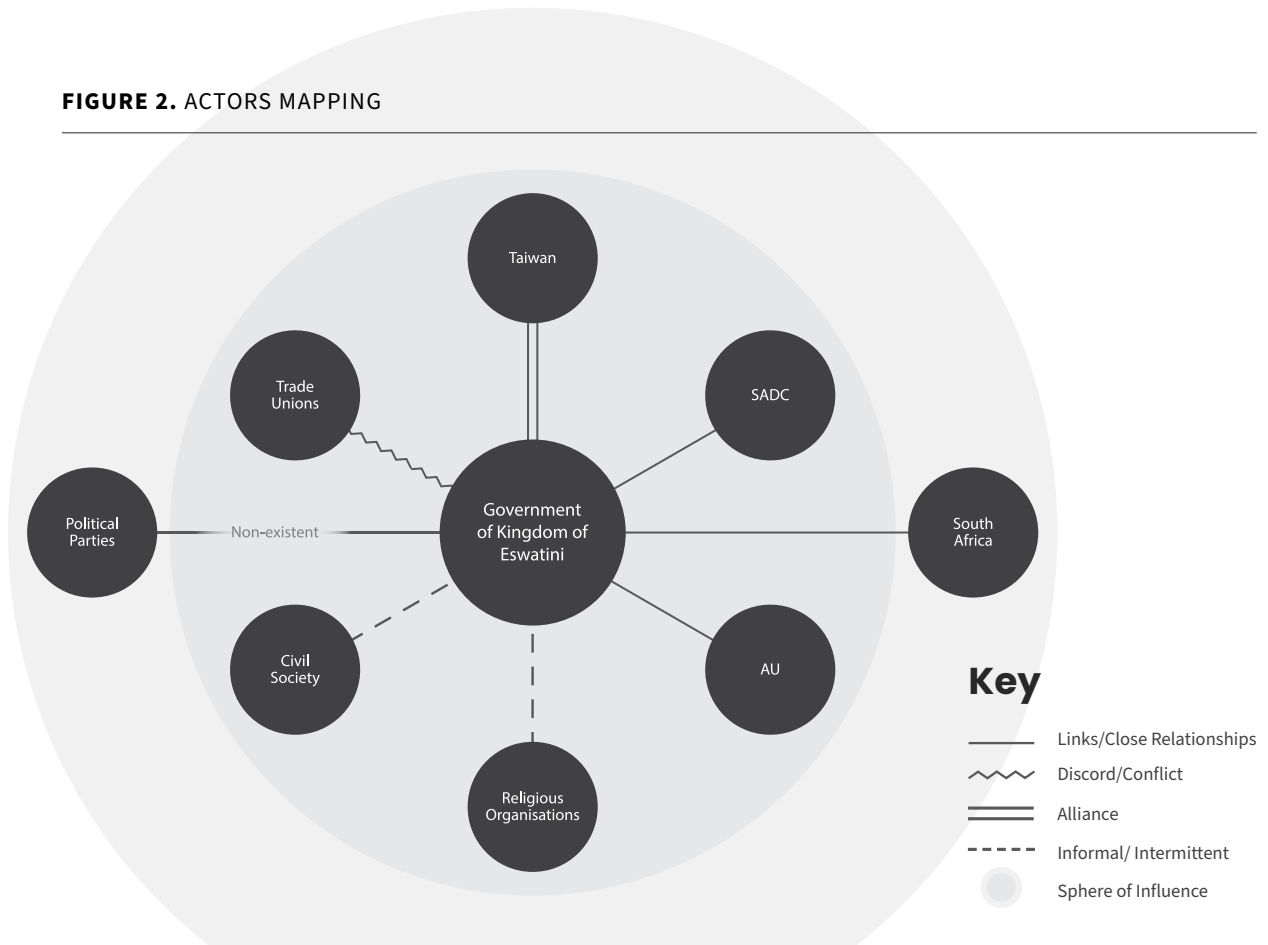
14 Reporters Without Borders. <https://rsf.org/en/eswatini> 2021

15 Swaziland News <https://www.swazilandnews.co.za/>

16 Ibid

# ACTORS

FIGURE 2. ACTORS MAPPING



To fully grasp public life in Eswatini is to acknowledge the political centrality of culture and tradition and how these determine conceptions of power. The Swazi political system called *Tinkhundla* relies on a traditionalist ideology, elitist capital accumulation and networks of appointed chiefs at the local level. Its opacity is perhaps necessary, and it endures because it is so flexible, and as an ideology it holds no distinct policy positions yet maintains a firm grip on governance and society. Its orthodoxy is facilitated by the country's cultural homogeneity: the state of Eswatini consists of one Swazi nation in that all ethnic emaSwati speak the same language, share the same history and traditions and belong to one of less than two-dozen clans.

## The government

Eswatini is a dual monarchy, with the king, referred to as the *Ngwenyama* (Lion), in conjunction with his mother, referred to as the Queen Mother or *Ndlovukazi* (She-Elephant). The Constitution gives the king absolute power over all three branches of government, through his power of royal assent. The prime minister and

cabinet are appointed by the king. He also selects 10 of the 69 members of the House of Assembly (the other 59 are elected under the *Tinkhundla* system whereby parliamentary candidates seek nomination at their local constituency (*inkhundla*) levels). The Senate is more powerful, comprised of 30 members, 20 appointed by the king and 10 nominated by the House of Assembly. The chief justice is appointed by the king and similarly all judges are appointed by the king upon recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The chief justice is the chairperson of the JSC. Since the abolition of political parties in 1973, candidates are required to stand for parliamentary elections in an individual capacity and, in principle, election or appointment is on the basis of individual merit.

## Political parties

While the Bill of Rights assures freedom of assembly (Section 25[1]) there is no legislation that facilitates political party life such as their registration, regulation or funding. The legal standing of some political parties was made less ambiguous in 2008 with the passing of

the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA) under which the most prominent party, the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), its youth wing Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), and the Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) are banned and classified as terrorist groups. The STA, which Amnesty International describes as "imprecise"<sup>17</sup>, is a draconian law that has been sweepingly applied to designate activists as terrorists and certain provisions of the act (Section 9.1) may also curtail the media (the Act makes no provisions for a public interest clause) and other actors who practice freedom of expression. Despite the ban, political parties continue to exist and during the 2021 crisis have consolidated under the Political Party Assembly (PPA) and are represented in the Multistakeholder Forum.

## Trade unions

Since the abolition of political parties in 1973, trade unions have been at the center of popular dissent.<sup>18</sup> The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) was established in 1971 and, as the organization with the most affiliates, it posed a threat to the regime from inception. The state succeeded in monitoring and suppressing its activities during its formative years. In the 1990s, the federation emerged as a stronger force while merging, if not explicitly then by interest, with underground democracy groups like the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO). As PUDEMO initiated a campaign of civil disobedience in 1996, the SFTU complemented these efforts with a general strike compelling the state to recognize international worker's day (May Day). The unions also presented a memorandum of 27 Demands, which were a collection of labour demands including full participation in constitutional reform thereby encompassing not only worker's rights but all citizens' human rights.<sup>19</sup> While unions like the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and Swaziland Federation of Labor (SFL) and the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)<sup>20</sup> had temporarily filled the vacuum created by a suppressed opposition, unions pragmatically functioned within the confines of their relationship with the state. At present, direct challenges on the absolute monarchy remain at the ideological fringes of unions' agendas.

## Civil society

A vibrant civil society exists in Eswatini. Established in 1983, the Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations (CANGO) is an umbrella body and comprises over 70 member organizations. CANGO's mission is to "coordinate, advocate, strengthen capacity and empower NGOs to effectively deliver on their mandates". Liphimbo Labomake is a women's coalition that brings together more than 20 women's and women-led CSOs to amplify women's voices in the socio-economic and political spheres. Other influential groups include the Council of Swaziland Churches among faith-based organisations and Lawyers for Human Rights. Since the government prohibited the delivery of petitions in late June 2021, these groups have advocated for all-inclusive dialogue. As a consequence of the June-July crisis, a Multistakeholder Forum comprising of representatives of CSOs including Liphimbo Labomake, Council of Swaziland Churches, workers unions, political parties, organized business, youth groups, students and Lawyers for Human Rights was constituted and has actively advocated for an all-inclusive dialogue. The Forum crafted a comprehensive roadmap towards a peaceful resolution to the impasse which was presented to the SADC Troika.<sup>21</sup>

The Swazi diaspora has been active and united in the call for justice for Thabani and #SwaziLivesMatter in the aftermath of the June crisis. Through social media, protests and petitions at global capitals, the diaspora is involved in conscientizing the world about unchecked human rights violations, stifled democracy and governance challenges in Eswatini.

17 Amnesty International, Key human rights concerns highlighted by Amnesty International in advance of Swaziland's Universal Periodic Review hearing in October 2011, p.5

18 X. Simelane, The making of the Swazi working class: Challenges to the emergence of a countermovement in Swaziland, p. 25

19 X. Simelane, p. 27 and J. Mzizi, p. 37. The strike lasted for 9 days and was the largest and costliest worker demonstration in the country's history.

20 SFTU and SFL were subsumed into TUCOSWA in 2012

21 Restoring long-term peace and stability in the Kingdom of Eswatini: formal inputs and representations from the broad Multi-Stakeholders' Forum to the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (TROIKA) 15/07/2021

# CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Democratic sentiments have been simmering in Eswatini for decades. Activists and members of the banned political parties have sporadically called for a constitutional monarchy, where the king and his institution are ceremonial and a prime minister, as head of government, is elected.

In May 2021, 25-year-old law student, Thabani Nkomonye, allegedly died under police custody. As contradictory statements from the police led to confusion about the cause of his death, student activists called for demonstrations.<sup>22</sup> Protests at his memorial service on 21 May turned violent and students proceeded to march to parliament. On social media, the hashtag #JusticeForThabani trended in Eswatini as protests morphed into a rallying call for other issues including demands for democratic reforms and other social and economic issues led by three dissident Members of Parliament (MPs); Bacede Mabuza, Mthandeni Dube and Mduduzi Simelane. In the days that followed, emaSwati delivered petitions calling for reforms in 56 of the 59 constituencies.<sup>23</sup>

On 24 June, the Acting Prime Minister (PM) Themba Masuku announced that citizens were banned from delivering petitions to their local constituencies citing COVID-19 violations and that “it has become apparent that this exercise has created a breeding ground for anarchy and has been intentionally hijacked to sow seeds of division.”<sup>24</sup> On the evening of 25 June, a demonstration in support of “justice for Thabani” erupted in Msunduzi township in the capital city of Mbabane. The community of Siphofaneni in the east of the country, which is represented by one of the three MPs calling for democratic reforms, was due to deliver its petition on the Saturday after the announcement by the Acting PM. The community attempted to deliver the petition but the police blocked the community members and the MP from approaching the Inkhundla centre. This set off protests in Siphofaneni town and surrounding areas on Saturday evening. On 28 June, a wave of unprecedented protests in the industrial areas of Matsapha and Manzini erupted. By the end of 28 June, 28 protesters had been shot and by 6 July, 45 people had been killed.<sup>25</sup> On 29 June, the government ordered telecommunications companies to shut down the internet. Companies owned and affiliated with the monarchy were targeted while other businesses were destroyed and looted. Soldiers fired live rounds at a United States diplomatic vehicle and searched it amidst the protests.<sup>26</sup> According to Amnesty International, more than 70 people have been killed by security forces during the unrest<sup>27</sup> while the government reported that there were 34 casualties.<sup>28</sup> The Acting Prime Minister reported \$204 million in damages and an estimated 5000 jobs lost.<sup>29</sup>

22 Mbuyisa, C & Mndebele, M. eSwatini killings: All the king’s men vs the people. <https://www.newframe.com/eswatini-killings-all-the-kings-men-vs-the-people/>

23 Ibid

24 Eswatini Government. Acting Prime Minister’s Speech on 24 June 2021 @EswatiniGovern1

25 Nkumane, Z. Burnin’ and Lootin’: Respectability, Negative Peace and the Eswatini protests. <https://republic.com.ng/august-september-2021/burnin-and-lootin-eswatini/>, 17 August 2021

26 Chutel, L. Eswatini soldiers fired on US diplomatic vehicle during chaos of protests. <https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/eswatini-soldiers-fired-on-us-diplomatic-car-during-chaos-of-protests-20210708>

27 Vandome, C. eSwatini monarchy must address demands for democratic reform. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/08/eswatini-monarchy-must-address-demands-democratic-reform>. 25 August 2021).

28 Eswatini Observer. 28 July 2021. NATCOM Confirms 34 Unrest deaths

29 @EswatiniGovern1 (Eswatini Government), <https://twitter.com/eswatinigovern1/status/1411369955392733184?lang=en>, 3 July 2021

# ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT RESPONSES

## From South Africa

Relations between South Africa and Eswatini have historically been complex and there has not been a clear and cohesive position from South Africa on the “Swaziland question.”<sup>30</sup> While the government of South Africa issued a mildly worded statement on 1 July, calling on “all sides to exercise restraint<sup>31</sup>, the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), was sterner saying the Mswati regime “should desist from autocracy, strong-handed crisis management and brutal repression of legitimate civilian concerns.”<sup>32</sup> An opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which also has a local branch, EFF-Eswatini, issued strong statements in support of the protesters and called for diplomatic intervention and mediation by South Africa during the protests.<sup>33</sup>

## From SADC

On 4 July, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) dispatched a one-day Troika ministerial fact-finding mission to the country. However, it was criticized for failing to meet with civil society organizations and political parties. A technical fact-finding mission was deployed from 15 to 22 July to engage a broader range of stakeholders to gather perspectives on the conditions that led to the deadly protests.<sup>34</sup> By the end of August, the Troika report has still not been received by stakeholders. It was reported on the eve of the SADC Heads of State meeting on 16 August that a preliminary report was submitted to the king.<sup>35</sup> Notably, there was no mention of Eswatini in the SADC Communique of 18 August 2021.<sup>36</sup>

## From the African Union

On 1 July, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, issued a statement in the midst of protests calling for “all national stakeholders to display leadership and engage in constructive dialogue towards the amicable resolution of issues.”<sup>37</sup> As the principle of subsidiarity establishes specific norms between continental and subregional responses, with the African Union following the precedence established by the relevant REC to which a member state belongs, the expected course of action is that the African Union will continue to reiterate the precedence established by SADC.

## From the United Nations

The United Nations documented the fissures in Eswatini’s political system through the United Nations in Eswatini Common Country Analysis (CCA) conducted in 2019 and published in 2020<sup>38</sup>. The CCA notes the restrictions to freedoms enunciated in section 24 of the Constitution. Governance challenges including “interference in the judiciary; arbitrary use of public order and anti-terrorism laws to silence and intimidate dissenting political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists; traditional justice system does not operate in accordance with the international fair trial standards” were highlighted in the report.<sup>39</sup> Also cited in the CCA is the poor ranking of the country in the Mo Ibrahim Index 2019 (47 out of 55 African countries).

30 Vandome, C, Vines, A & Weimer, M (2013). Swaziland: Southern Africa’s Forgotten Crisis, p.40

31 Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Ongoing political and security situation in the Kingdom of Eswatini, <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/2021/eswa0701.htm>, 1 July 2021

32 African National Congress. ANC statement on the instability in eSwatini. 1 July 2021

33 Makinana, A. <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-07-05-eff-demands-diplomatic-intervention-in-eswatini-after-pro-democracy-protests/> 5 July 2021

34 Ramdeen, M. Reflections on the unrest and violence in Eswatini amidst a third wave of the pandemic. <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/reflections-on-the-unrest-and-violence-in-eswatini-amidst-a-third-wave-of-the-pandemic/> 18 August 2021

35 Eswatini Live Feed. 16 August 2021

<https://www.facebook.com/EswatiniLiveFeed/posts/598591854851110>

36 Communique of the 41st Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government. 18 August 2021

37 Statement of the African Union Commission Chairperson on the situation in the Kingdom of Eswatini (2021)

38 UN Eswatini. United Nations Common Country Analysis of the Kingdom of Eswatini, April 2020

39 Ibid



# SCENARIOS

## Best case scenario

Absolute monarchies are not enduring systems as the pressures of globalization and modernization have compelled many to succumb to reform in order to remain relevant and accountable. A peaceful transformation of Eswatini is one that would be entirely Swazi-led and dependent on the royal family to willingly and successfully redefine their role and influence in a modern state.

Eswatini's constitution allows for *emabandla* (traditional advisory bodies) and provisions exist for the monarch to receive advice from *emaSwati*, although the constitution also allows the king to overrule all these structures including parliament. For decades, the call for democratic reform has centered around the transformation of the kingdom to a constitutional monarchy. With increasing access to unfiltered information through online newspapers and social media, the public is more aware of entrenched corruption, royal family influence on governance and the economy, human rights violations all of which has resulted in escalating calls for a government that would be entirely accountable to the people.

While there appears to be widely-held appetite for change, it has also become evident in the months of protests in 2021 that without authentic, inclusive dialogue there is no opportunity to develop a common vision to manage the desired reforms towards democracy. Political parties, trade unions and activists have adopted various strategies and opinions on the way forward. However, the Multistakeholder Forum could be the most strategic in initiating effective dialogue in view of the polarized positions that now exist as a result of the violent protests. Notably, this is the most violent state-sponsored response that *emaSwati* have experienced in modern history. For Eswatini, the best-case scenario is a peaceful, citizen-centered and inclusive process of reform.

## Worst case scenario

The worst-case scenario would be characterized by entrenched polarization, increased military presence, violent quelling of protest actions and the regime continues in its current trajectory of undermining calls for democratic reform. The arrest of the two MPs, Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube and the warrant of arrest for Mduduzi Simelane indicate continued repression. The extended curfew and enforcement by the military has resulted in indiscriminate harassment and arrest of citizens.

Stifling of 'progressive forces', and continued exercise of executive powers by the king with no effort to amend the constitution to open the political space for popular participation would likely continue. Due to lack of dialogue, there would be continued protests, which would ultimately result in further loss of lives, valuable infrastructure and resources.

## Most likely scenario

The King Mswati regime has demonstrated a remarkable awareness of space and time, adapting to threats to its status quo with either increasing levels of repression (such as the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008) or superficial changes with little to no substance (such as the 2005 Constitution). The *Tikhundla* system is a flexible system as its primary fixation is the survival of monarchical rule. As such, the most likely scenario is not dissimilar to the worst-case scenario: intensified subjugation from the state or a piecemeal attempt at reform or a combination of both, continued arrests and intimidation of political activists and certain Members of Parliament and, eventually, the waning of the current momentum for change.

The latest iteration of dissent is loose and cuts across the established formations. However, with increased militarization, leaders would become less visible, increasing the difficulty of organizing which would result in more anonymous arson, guerilla tactics aimed at "soft targets" and disorganized protests. Finally, government control of communication networks will likely continue limiting space for open and constructive engagement among citizens while allowing rumors and fear to fester.

## For the government

Between June and August 2021, over 70 civilians<sup>40</sup> were allegedly killed by security forces. EmaSwati watching the unprecedented violence on international and social media would be reasonably shocked at the level of violence and intimidation exerted by security forces on civilians. It is imperative that confidence in the security forces is restored and that citizens feel safe in their homes, and that communities are protected and properties are secured.

In view of the current political and governance impasse, there is a need to convene an all-inclusive, national dialogue to chart the immediate way forward. All groups must be represented including youth, women, labour unions, FBOs, CSOs, political parties, organized business, traditional leaders, persons with disabilities and all minority communities.

For the medium and long term, local and inclusive dialogues including civic education leading to the amendment of the constitution should be convened with strict timelines and accountability mechanisms.

Moving forward, a key ingredient in gaining public trust is to ensure a transparent and effective parliament, elected by the people and fully executing their role in accordance with good governance principles in a democratic society. An independent and impartial judiciary is imperative.

## Private sector

The Eswatini business community was adversely affected by the protests. In addition to the COVID-19 induced challenges experienced since early in 2020, the protracted lockdowns, disruption of supply and marketing chains, businesses have been targets for destruction and looting. The private sector has consistently called for an all-inclusive dialogue as an urgent intervention to solve the current crisis.

## Civil society

Civil society, including women's coalitions and faith-based organizations (FBOs) have called for opening of the political space and inclusive dialogue. Since July, civil society organizations have supported families and children affected by the violence, through financial and medical support, legal aid and food packages to vulnerable families.

Activists and civil society actors need to adopt a common stance and a united cause. The extent of its influence will depend on whether these various actors are able to overcome their different strategies, views and personality clashes. This crisis has provided an opportunity for civil society, as part of their community mobilization efforts, to engage communities and facilitate public dialogues on peacebuilding, conflict resolution and good governance.

## For South Africa

The influence of South Africa in Eswatini (and potentially, on Eswatini) cannot be overstated: 70% of Eswatini's imports are from South Africa, the Swazi currency (Lilangeni) is pegged to the South African Rand thereby subsuming Eswatini's monetary policy to South Africa, the main financial institutions in the kingdom are South African and South Africa is the main destination for Swazi migrants.<sup>41</sup> A decisive position from South Africa, followed by action would have resonating consequences on the current crisis. In recent years, the Ramaphosa administration supported calls for political and economic reform but has been reluctant to take direct action.<sup>42</sup>

## For SADC

Surrounded and outnumbered by its larger and more influential neighbours, Eswatini has skirted below the radar in the region but was renowned to be a "peaceful nation". Even though the protests of June-July were unprecedented in the country's history, Eswatini is still not viewed as a major threat to regional peace and security. For SADC, Eswatini presents an opportunity for engagement that is sincerely human rights and governance-based rather than strategic and interests-based, a true test case for its Protocol on Politics, Defense

40 Vandome, C (25 August 2021). eSwatini monarchy must address demands for democratic reform. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/08/eswatini-monarchy-must-address-demands-democratic-reform>

41 World Bank (2011), Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011 (Washington DC: World Bank), p234

42 Vandome, C, Vines, A & Weimer, M (2013). Swaziland: Southern Africa's Forgotten Crisis, p. 64

and Security Cooperation which purports to promote democracy and protect human rights.<sup>43</sup> Eswatini would benefit from regional engagement on rights-focused governance to contribute to the people's quest for a democratic dispensation. Eswatini could re-establish her peaceful existence if supported to adjust to the changing national context.

## For international partners

Eswatini is not of significant strategic interest within the region and less so in the international system. There are five full diplomatic missions in Eswatini and the kingdom is the only African country with diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Eswatini cultivates close relations with Asia and the Middle East and has diplomatic missions in Malaysia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)<sup>44</sup> to attract investment and, in turn, to possibly reduce pressure for reform from established donors like the EU and US.

In Eswatini, the US government supports strengthening of health systems, youth development and education.<sup>45</sup> The US embassy has also frequently supported civil society groups engaged in civic education and institutional strengthening and its mission engages with youth, women and media. The European Union's primary objective is the implementation of the "Cotonou Partnership Agreement" whose "central objective of this partnership is to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty through sustainable development, the progressive integration into the world economy and the promotion of the rule of law, democracy and human rights."<sup>46</sup>

The European Union and the United States have continued to call for dialogue among all the parties including political parties.<sup>47</sup> However, their stated political and economic leverage may be better placed with engaging directly with the monarchy.

The crisis has resulted in the violation of human rights on a scale never before experienced in Eswatini. Citizens have been killed and injured as a result of the armed forces using live ammunition supposedly quelling violence and instituting curfew. Out of the 697 arrests,<sup>48</sup> a proportion were children under 18 years of age. As no bail was granted this has exposed children to conditions which are in violation of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act<sup>49</sup> and obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN's Human Rights Rapporteur should dispatch a mission to Eswatini to gather information and document these abuses. It is anticipated that there will be need for mediated reconciliation efforts.

43 Southern African Development Community (1996). Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation

44 Government of Eswatini. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation <http://www.gov.sz/index.php/departments-sp-336728999>

45 US State Department, U.S Relations with Eswatini, 13 January 2020

46 Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Swaziland, Political and Economic Relation [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/eswatini/1980/eswatini-and-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/eswatini/1980/eswatini-and-eu_en)

47 Joint statement-EU, UK, US Missions (2021) Dialogue needed to calm tensions

48 Eswatini Observer 28 July 2021. NATCOM Confirms 697 arrests

49 Swaziland Government (2012). Children's Protection and Welfare Act.

# CONFLICT TIMELINE

## 1960-2021

**1968 September 6:** Independence from Britain

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**1973 April 12:** King Sobhuza II repels Swaziland's independence constitution

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**1994 Feb - 1995 March:** mass action by workers in support of "27 Demands"

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**2005 July 26:** The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland is adopted

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**2021 May:** Suspected extra-judicial killing by police of law student and activist, Thabani Nkomonye, sparks widespread protests in Mbabane, Manzini and Matsapha

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**May:** Petitions calling for election of Prime Minister are delivered by constituents to MPs covering 55 of the 59 constituencies

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**June 24:** Acting Prime Minister announces suspension of delivery of petitions

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**June 25:** Attempted delivery of petitions in Mbabane stopped by armed forces and violence erupts

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**June 26:** attempted delivery of petition to one of pro-democracy MP's constituency in Siphofaneni stopped by armed forces and violence erupted. MP placed under house arrest

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**June 29:** National internet shutdown effected

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**July 1:** South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) issues a statement calling on security forces to "show restraint, protect lives"

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**July 1:** Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, issues a statement on the situation in Eswatini

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**July 4:** The SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security (Troika) in Eswatini for a one-day consultation and engagements

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**July 5:** Acting Prime Minister announces costs of the damage was allegedly about E3 billion (about \$2 million) and cost 5 000 jobs

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**July 8:** warrants of arrest for 3 pro-democracy MPs issued

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**15 July:** Embassies of the European Union, United States and the United Kingdom consulate issue a joint statement calling for and endorsing dialogue

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**July 15-22:** Technical fact-finding mission of the SADC Troika

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**July 16:** King Mswati summons nation to Sibaya

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**July 16:** Pro-democracy march in Manzini disbursed by armed forces

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**July 16:** King Mswati appoints former CEO, Mr. Cleopas Siphon Dlamini, as the new Prime Minister.

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**July 18:** off-duty police officer shoots and kills two young men at a wake of the funeral of one of the casualties of military in Lomahasha sparking protests by residents. Police Commissioner announces to the community and nation that the officer has been arrested and suspended

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**July 24-25:** Protests by youth and community members, including political parties and supporters at the funerals of the two deceased young men in Lomahasha community

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**July 25:** Reformist MPs Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube are arrested and the third MP, Mduduzi Simelane, goes into hiding

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**July 27:** National Police Commissioner reports that there have been 34 casualties and 697 arrests

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**August 9:** High Court bail applications for the two MPs is denied and the two are held in custody pending trial

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**August 12:** King appoints two MPs (who were opposed to pro-democracy calls in Parliament) to replace ministers who succumbed to COVID-19 late in 2020 and early 2021

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## Peace and Security Reports

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Although key continental and regional institutions have their own early warning reporting systems, policy making within these institutions also benefit from a number of analytical and periodic reports generated by think tanks and research institutes. The Research Unit at IPSS provides brief and critical analyses of the state of peace and security in different African countries as well as critical appraisals of interventions by various African actors. The reports will cover African countries showing positive signs as well as those undergoing negative developments.



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