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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
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Swazi Government Threatens to Strangle Union Leader

Brussels, 8 August 2014 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) condemns in the strongest possible terms the Prime Minister of Swaziland, Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, who threatened that the trade union and human rights leaders who attend the African Summit in Washington, D.C. should be strangled upon their return.

In July, the United States decided to suspend trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to Swaziland, as of 1 January 2015. The decision was taken because the government has for years engaged in serious and systematic violations of the fundamental rights of workers. These violations include the jailing of trade union leaders, the deregistration of the union federation (TUCOSWA) and the banning of strikes and demonstrations. In January 2014, the ILO High-Level Fact-finding Mission to Swaziland found that "no concrete, tangible progress has been made on the various matters concerning [freedom of association], some of which have been pending for over a decade."

"The Prime Minister made his threat as he was questioned by members of Parliament as to what the government intended to do to restore AGOA benefits. Mr. Dlamini has absolutely no one to blame for the potential loss of these benefits but his own government," explained Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC. "Far away from the handshakes and polite conversation at the African Summit, the government has shown its true face. We call on governments to immediately urge the Swazi government to publicly withdraw its threat and to ensure the safety of these courageous activists upon their return. Further, we urge other countries which grant trade preferences to Swaziland to join the US in initiating procedures to withdraw them until such time as fundamental worker rights are respected in law and practice in Swaziland."

To participate in the Labourstart campaign: <http://www.labourstart.org/go/swaziland>

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 325 national affiliates. Follow us on the web: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI> For more information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2 224 02 04 or +32 476 621 018

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