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Heavily Armed Police Intimidate Striking Workers at ANC-owned Mine in Swaziland

Brussels, 27 November 2014 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has expressed serious concerns over intimidation of striking workers at the Maloma mine in Swaziland. Some 250 workers went on strike on 24 November, after the mine management refused to negotiate over a US\$ 72 housing allowance with the Amalgamated Trade Unions of Swaziland (ATUSWA). All legal requirements were observed by the striking workers, and even though the strike was peaceful, the workers were surrounded by police equipped with riot shields, protective headgear, guns and teargas. During the strike, management refused the workers access to water, toilets and medical facilities.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "The Swazi dictatorship is well-known for its absolute intolerance of trade unions, or any other form of democratic activity. These workers simply want justice and have done nothing to justify the threat of violence from the Swazi King's security forces. The ANC, whose investment arm controls the mine, has to step in immediately and stand up for workers' rights. "

Chancellor House, the investment arm of the ANC, owns 75% of the Maloma mine, with the remaining 25% owned by the Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, a fund controlled by King Mswati III, who is one of the world's last remaining absolute monarchs. Recently, the Swazi government announced an immediate ban on all trade union and employer federations, in violation of international labour standards.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 324 national affiliates.

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