



**PABASA**

PAN AFRICAN BAR ASSOCIATION  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

**- STATEMENT ON THE DEATH OF THULANI MASEKO –**

PABASA is deeply shocked at the targeted murder of renowned human rights lawyer and activist Thulani Rudolph Maseko, aged 52. Thulani was a human rights colleague and friend whose untimely and brutal death marks a cruel indictment on the eSwatini monarchy.

We remember Thulani as an incisive legal mind and human rights activist who spent his life opposed to the oppressive rule in eSwatini and who worked tirelessly in seeking democracy and constitutional freedom for the citizens of his country.

Thulani worked both as a human rights activist and an attorney who represented activists who fought against state repression. In 2005 Thulani graduated from the University of Pretoria with an LL.M. in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa and, in 2006, he clerked at the Constitutional Court of South Africa for the then Chief Justice Pius Nkonzo Langa. He holds a Herbert Humphrey fellowship in leadership and was conferred a Master's Degree in International Legal Studies from the American University Washington College of Law in 2011. Thulani was a founder member and Executive Director of Lawyers for Human Rights (Swaziland). He worked for the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) for several years as a consultant based in Eswatini/Swaziland. He also chaired the Multi-Stakeholders Forum (MSF), a collaboration of political parties and civil society groups working to amplify calls for democratic reforms. His integrity, bravery and commitment to human rights won him the Southern Africa Shield award, that honours "exceptional individuals who have contributed to changes in their community by peacefully promoting and protecting human rights".



In March 2014 one of his writings was published in a national magazine, critical of the then Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi and an increasingly politicised judiciary, resulted in his imprisonment for two years along with journalist, Bheki Makhubu. During this time, Thulani was subjected to solitary confinement.

We celebrate Thulani's unwavering commitment to constitutionalism, the rule of law and democratic engagement between the State and citizens. Maseko wrote extensively about the need for a national dialogue and was relentless in his belief that this was the solution to the country's challenges.

In Thulani's words, the people of eSwatini "are caught between hope and fear". We recall Thulani's statement as an accused in the dock in 2014:

"We deny that the call for a constitutional monarchy is a call to overthrow the monarch in Swaziland. We are calling for a system of government where democratic governance can and will co-exist with a monarchy whose powers are properly limited by law ... so that nobody is above the law, but the law, is the ruler."

We urge the political principals in South Africa, SADC and the African community to expressly condemn the wanton abuse of state power to silence and repress citizens from exercising their fundamental human rights and freedoms. The escalation in repressive measures by the government of eSwatini against civil expression is intolerable and must be challenged at every level. His death is a senseless tragedy and we strongly condemn this brutal act.

PABASA sends its condolences to Thulani's wife and children in their time of grief. Rest in Power.

Lizzy Baloyi-Mere SC  
Chairperson

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