



Martha Tinny MOLEMA
President
Présidente

Akhator Joel ODIGIE
General Secretary
Secrétaire Général

Route Internationale d'Atakpamé
Centre FOPADESC Agoè – Nyivé
B.P. : 4401 – Tel.: 00228 22 25 03 90
LOME - TOGO
Email: info@ituc-africa.org
Web: www.ituc-africa.org

May Day Is Not a Crime: ITUC-African Condemns Eswatini's Government's Aggression Against workers and their Trade Unions.

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) notes with grave concern the decision by the Magistrate Court of Nhlanganano in Eswatini to dismiss the application by TUCOSWA to hold a May Day event on 1 May 2026.

This concern arises from the circumstances surrounding the application: after being prevented from using the sports ground of Hlathikhulu Central High School, TUCOSWA turned to the court for relief, despite having previously obtained authorization from the school authorities to host the May Day celebrations on the premises.

The denial of the right to commemorate International Workers' Day is a troubling departure from the spirit of constitutionalism. It represents a serious setback to freedom of association, assembly, and expression. May Day is a globally recognised platform for workers to express their aspirations, organise, and advance social justice -its restriction undermines democratic norms and labour rights. It is an unnecessary aggression against workers and sacred norms.

ITUC-Africa calls on the courts of Eswatini to uphold the law with independence and integrity, guided by constitutional principles and international obligations rather than expediency or external pressures. Justice must serve the people and protect their fundamental rights.

We urge the Government of Eswatini to respect trade union freedoms and ensure an enabling environment for workers and their organisations to operate without interference, in line with international labour standards.

African workers and their counterparts all over the world stand strong in solidarity with workers, their trade unions, families, and the people of Eswatini, who have remained unbowed in the face of relentless, unprovoked, but paranoia-driven attacks by the King's government. We echo Eswatini's workers' and people's call for genuine multiparty democracy, freedom, and justice.

We wish you all a happy Workers' Day commemoration as we continue to advance the struggle for workers' rights, dignity, and democratic space in Eswatini, Africa and the world.

Issued in Lomé, Togo on the 1st of May 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Akhator Joel Odigie'.

Akhator Joel Odigie
General Secretary
ITUC-Africa

Cc:

- International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- African Union (AU)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)