



Centre for Applied  
Legal Studies

DJ Du Plessis Building West Campus Wits Braamfontein  
Private Bag 3 Wits University 2050 South Africa  
Tel + 27 11 717-8600 Fax + 27 11 717 1702  
[www.law.wits.ac.za/cals](http://www.law.wits.ac.za/cals)

31 January 2023

To: **THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

c/o: **Ms Malebo Sibiya & Mr Mike Louw**

Per email: [malebo@presidency.gov.za](mailto:malebo@presidency.gov.za) and [presidentrsa@presidency.gov.za](mailto:presidentrsa@presidency.gov.za)

**MINISTER OF POLICE**

**GENERAL BHEKI CELE**

c/o: **Ms Sharon Gaehler & Ms Nonkululeko Phokwe**

Per email: [gaehlersmk@saps.gov.za](mailto:gaehlersmk@saps.gov.za) and [phokwen@saps.gov.za](mailto:phokwen@saps.gov.za)

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

**MR RONALD LAMOLA**

c/o Ms Delsy Moraba

[Demoraba@justice.gov.za](mailto:Demoraba@justice.gov.za) and [ministry@justice.gov.za](mailto:ministry@justice.gov.za)

**MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND  
COOPERATION**

**DR NALEDI PANDOR**

Per email: [Minister@dirco.gov.za](mailto:Minister@dirco.gov.za)

**CC: DIRECTOR GENERAL: DEPARTMENT OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

**MR ZANE DANGOR**

Per email: [bowmanj@dirco.gov.za](mailto:bowmanj@dirco.gov.za)

Dear Honourable President Cyril Ramaphosa, Honourable Minister Bheki Cele, Honourable Minister Ronald Lamola and Honourable Minister Naledi Pandor

**RE: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CALL ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO CONDEMN THE KILLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER THULANI MASEKO AND INVESTIGATE THE DEATHS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

1. We, the undersigned civil society organisations write to you to express deep concern regarding the continued repression and killing of human rights defenders and social justice activists in South Africa and throughout the SADC region.
2. The recent murder of human rights defender Thulani Maseko in eSwatini has sent shock waves across the world. His death is a chilling reminder that human rights defenders are not free or safe to champion the causes that seek to bring positive change in society. This also comes at a time when civil society in South Africa continues to grapple with the assassinations of social justice activists Lindokuhle Mnguni, Ayanda Ngila, and Nokuthula Mabaso only a few months prior.
3. As we mourn the death of Thulani Maseko, and many other activists who have been killed for daring to speak truth to power, we remember the incredible and brave man that he was. We honour his life and legacy and stand fully in support of the call for democracy and broader social justice reforms in eSwatini which he so fervently fought for.
4. We support the [statement](#) released by the Southern African Development Community and supported by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. This includes the call for the transparent and comprehensive investigation into the killing as well as dialogue in the resolution of political and other challenges faced by the people of eSwatini.
5. We therefore call upon the South African government to release a statement condemning the killing of Thulani Maseko and acknowledging the widespread threats to the lives of activists across Southern Africa. We further urge the South African government to call for an independent and transparent investigation into the death of Thulani Maseko. Finally, we call upon the South African government to commit to coordinating with the relevant stakeholders a sub-regional response to the attacks and killings of human rights defenders in the SADC region.
6. We remind you that the rights guaranteed in the Constitution and international treaties of which South Africa is a signatory to such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the U.N. International Convention for Civil and Political Rights demand that measures be put in place to ensure the rights to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and protest are promoted and protected. This includes the rights of human rights defenders who

should have liberty to express their opinions whether political or otherwise, without reprisal. Rights and freedoms in SADC countries are therefore under siege if human rights defenders continue to be killed for exercising them.

Yours faithfully,

Centre for Applied Legal Studies

Centre for Environmental Rights

Women's Legal Centre

Section 27

Open Secrets

Right2Protest Project

Bench-Marks Foundation

Socio-Economic Rights Institute

Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network

Alternative Information and Development Centre

Southern Africa Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power

Mining Affected Communities United in Action

Women Affected by Mining United in Action

Lawyers for Human Rights

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA

Freedom of Expression Institute

Right2Know Campaign

University of Free State Law Clinic

The Peace Centre

Public Affairs Research Institute

Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Southern African Institute for Responsive and Accountable Governance

Free State Centre for Human Rights

Equal Education

Legal Resource Centre

Zabalaza Socialist Forum and Pathways Institute

AntiRepression Collective

Public Affairs Research Institute

WoMin African Alliance

The Forge

Cala University Students Association

Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution

Amandla.mobi

The Rastafari Human Rights Institute in Azania/South Afrika

Public Services International

Just Associates Southern Africa

The Green Connection

Prof Kelly Gillespie

Prof Richard Pithouse

Dr Sanele Sibanda

Mr Buang Jones

Prof Babatunde Fagbayibo

Mr Jared Sacks

Mr Mark Heywood

Prof Jonathan Klaaren

Adv Tembeka Ngcukaitobi

The Right Reverend Ruben Phillip, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Natal

Ms Rumana Akoob

Mr Andile Notywala

Ms Fatima Shabodien

Ms Moshibudi Motimele

Prof Joel Modiri

Prof Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni

Ms Mandisa Shandu

Mr Ntando Sindane

Ms Phumzile Mtetwa

Adv Sipho Mantula

Dr Pedro Mzileni

Prof Sandra Liebenburg