

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

His Excellency, The R. H. Dr Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini
P.O Box 395
Mbabane
Swaziland

Fax: +268 2404 3943

22 April 2014

Your Excellency,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of journalist Bheki Makhubu. Mr. Makhubu is facing trial today on contempt of court charges for having published an exposé questioning the impartiality of the Swaziland judicial system.

Mr. Makhubu, Editor-in-Chief of *The Nation* magazine, has been kept in a maximum-security prison after having been arrested along with prominent human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko. Briefly freed after a judge found their initial arrest unlawful, a new warrant was ordered by Justice Simelane on 9 April.

Your Excellency, reports suggest Mr. Makhubu is being held in deplorable conditions and that he has suffered degrading treatment during his trial and incarceration. Furthermore, reports suggest Justice Simelane - after having been named in the articles for which the two defendants are being prosecuted - will also appear as a witness in the same trial he is adjudicating, an appalling breach of judicial independence and professionalism.

Your Excellency, there are serious doubts surrounding today's proceedings, and especially concerning whether Mr. Makhubu will receive a fair trial. In light of the controversy surrounding Justice Simelane's reported 'dual role', clearly Mr. Makhubu's piece investigating the Swazi judiciary was written and published in the public interest. We therefore urge you to call for the dismissal of all charges and to release Bheki Makhubu with immediate effect.

Sincerely,

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The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

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