

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



ACTING PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Siyanivusela Nine Bekunene.

The events of the past few days have been quite alarming and upsetting. We have witnessed violence in several parts of the country perpetuated by an unruly crowd where people have been attacked, property destroyed, businesses looted and public roads blocked.

May I, from the onset, pass Government's sympathy to all the victims of the violence, including those that have been injured or lost their businesses and livelihoods over the past few days. Government would like to assure all emaSwati, residents of Eswatini, the international community and diplomatic partners that we are working around the clock to ensure that the situation is normalised.

The Kingdom of Eswatini has and continues to be grounded in peace and stability. This is based on knowledge accumulated over centuries that nothing can be achieved in an environment of anarchy, no matter what the grievance.

This country has remained united despite our differences of opinion, stayed grounded when life-changing challenges confronted us and we have paddled with precision and tact even when we doubted our capabilities. At the apex of it all, we have consistently respected the structures that define us, the ethos that make us different from the rest of the world.

We have held high the values and traditions that have kept us united even when we do not see eye to eye. It is who we are and nothing should ever come between us.

It should be clear that Government respects the freedom of expression and the banning of delivery of petitions to Tinkhundla is by no means stifling emaSwati from raising grievances.

This is a conscious decision to maintain the rule of law and de-escalate tension that had turned this exercise into violence and disorder.

Government has been following these protests and we want to assure the Nation that these concerns have reached our ears and we are addressing them. We will be working with Parliament and all concerned stakeholders to action them accordingly.

We are a Nation that believes in dialogue and it is with that in mind that we once again request all aggrieved emaSwati to use alternative channels to express their grievances. Government has opened an email address where emaSwati can continue to direct their concerns and petitions. The email address is petitions@gov.sz

This has been done in the interest of protecting emaSwati from the dangers of COVID-19, which is already showing a steep upward trajectory.

Like the rest of the world, the Kingdom of Eswatini is confronted by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic which has

gained ground over the past week. Our neighbours South Africa have already adjusted to Level 4 of their response owing to an onslaught of this virus.

We have received information that the much-dreaded Delta variant of the virus has been confirmed to be driving the third wave, especially in the Gauteng Province. Eswatini has already sent samples for analysis to determine if we do have this variant in our country. With our proximity to the Gauteng Province and high mobility between Eswatini and South Africa, the probability is quite high.

It is therefore important now more than ever that we become deliberate in our actions in order to save the lives of emaSwati and avoid a major spread of COVID-19. This Delta variant spreads much more rapidly than the variants we have had in the past. We appeal to all emaSwati to be extremely vigilant in observing the COVID-19 regulations and non-pharmaceutical protocols.

May I emphasise that despite the threat of the virus, Government remains committed to working on the

petitions we have received and accommodating any new grievances and concerns raised by emaSwati through electronic means to ensure the safety of all.

Curfew

In order to minimise unnecessary movement and ensure the safety and security of emaSwati and residents, Government has taken the decision to introduce a curfew between 6pm and 5am with immediate effect. All offices must be closed by 3:30pm to allow workers to get home safely. Essential workers will be required to produce a permit when travelling at night. No one is expected to be in the streets after 6pm.

Schools closure

Government has also taken the decision to suspend schools with immediate effect. This has been done to protect the lives of children.

Again, we wish to reiterate that Government has the interest of all emaSwati at heart and we are committed to

working together to find each other whenever we have differences. We are one people, even when we differ.

Unfortunately, the protests we are seeing of late have been hijacked by criminal elements. Such cannot be acceptable under any circumstances. No one can hide behind a glass wall of grievances to administer harm to others and cause unrest and anarchy.

The law will be upheld against all those who perpetuate anarchy and threaten the lives and livelihoods of emaSwati. Our security forces are on the ground to maintain law and order. We request the Nation to cooperate with security forces as they are deployed to protect the lives of all emaSwati and residents of this beautiful Kingdom, including private and public property.

Once again, I am appealing to the conscience of all emaSwati and those who love this country to ensure calm and peace is maintained at all times as we together seek ways to resolve the challenges we are facing.

THEMBA N. MASUKU

Acting Prime Minister

29 June 2021