



8 June 2021

Solidarity with striking workers in Lesotho

We join all principled individuals, organisations and movements throughout Africa and the world in denouncing the state-sanctioned violence against the women and men of the trade union: United Textile Employees (UNITE) in Lesotho.

Around 40 000 workers in the textile, clothing and garment industry in Lesotho have been on strike since 14 May, in response to the debilitating work conditions and unjust wages. Workers are being pushed into poverty because their current salaries cannot address their needs and, as majority women, are additionally exposed to the gendered-realities of violence and harassment.

When workers have challenged employers through the courts of law, bureaucracy and inefficiency have stalled the process and, as a result, have halted a regular source of income, which in turn has led to the expulsion of workers from their homes and seizure of their properties by landlords and even coercion into other forms of unprotected, precarious work.

When workers attempted to organise to protest these unfair conditions and demand something better, they were met with bureaucratic silence and police repression. Since 14 May, at least two workers have been killed and 12 have been shot (two of which are children aged 7 and 9) in Maputsoe and Maseru. The army is now patrolling the industry heavily armed, and workers remain at home..

We call on all organisations, movements, unions and parties to stand in solidarity with UNITE as they prepare for the government response to their just demands for life and dignity on 16 June. We lend our unconditional support to the striking workers in Lesotho, who have laid out the following clear demands:

- Justice for Pitso Mothala and Motselisi Ramasa, shot and killed by the police, as well as the many others injured.
- Payment of the lost salaries for the past financial year and 20% increment for the current financial year.
- The enactment of the social security scheme which entails the pension fund, unemployment insurance fund, workmen compensation, maternity protection and sick leave.
- Enactment of reviewed labour law which entails freedom of association to public servants, addressing precarious work, bargaining councils and many other important issues.
- Transformation of the ineffective labour courts which make workers' cases last more years than the terms stipulated in the labour codes.

- Redress for the COVID-19 regulation-induced company closures.

We support their call for the Lesotho government to act decisively in the interest of workers and their call for their government to stop brutalising trade union members and the communities surrounding the industrial areas in both Maseru and Maputsoe.

The demands made by the union constitute basic human rights and should be met immediately and without any further bloodshed. Furthermore, those guilty of the criminal suppression of workers and their organisations must be brought to justice as a matter of urgency.

For more, read the People's Dispatch coverage [here](#).

In solidarity,
Pan Africanism Today Secretariat