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## **THE FXI IS APPALLED TO LEARN THAT THE HIGH COURT IN MBABANE, SWAZILAND HAS SENTENCED BHEKI MAKHUBU**

The Freedom of Expression Institute is appalled to learn that the High Court in Mbabane, Swaziland has sentenced Bheki Makhubu, editor of the independent news magazine *The Nation*, and human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko to two years in prison for contempt of court despite continuing condemnation from the international community. The FXI maintains that this decision is a violation of the right to free expression and it undermines the respect for Swaziland's human rights obligations; and it predominantly violates the right to freedom of expression, which is enshrined in Swaziland's own constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This sentence is an indication that although these rights are constitutionally theoretical guaranteed, practically they are not accessible and the government is not obligated to vindicate the right to free expression; even one such as this which is critical of the government.

Many countries globally, have condemned this act; however, their sentence to imprisonment still prevailed. The FXI will continue to disapprove of this culture of impunity which is hindering the progression of respect and advancement of basic rights in Swaziland.

The Freedom of Expression Institute once again calls for their release. As a member of the international community, Swaziland may not carry on with disregarding the important critical voices of its people if it is to be regarded as a member which adheres to international standards that require all nations to protect the foundational right to freedom of expression.

**Executive Committee:** Anton (chairperson), Raymond Louw, Nobuntu Mbelle, Indra de Lanerolle, William Gumede, Oupa Lebogo, Sam Radebe, Franz Kruger. **Executive Director:** Tusi Fokane