

URGENT ACTION

STUDENT ACTIVIST JAILED UNDER TERRORISM LAW

Menzi Bongeka Bhembe, a 26-year-old university student and activist, was arrested on January 16, 2024, and charged under Eswatini's 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act. He has been held in detention for over two years in violation of due process, in what appears to be a politically motivated attempt to silence student activism. Eswatini authorities must immediately release Menzi Bongeka Bhembe and drop all charges against him as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: August 9, 2026

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 7.26. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

Hon. HRH Prince Simelane

Email: simelanedlamini4@gmail.com

Copies to: Under Secretary

Ms. Gugu V.Nsibandé

Email: nsibandegugu@yahoo.com

Send a copy of your letter to the address below

CC: Eswatini Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Eswatini Permanent Representative to the United

Nations, Thamie Dlamini

408 East 50th Street New York, NY 10022

Email: eswatini@un.int

Dear Honorable Minister,

Menzi Bongeka Bhembe is a 26-year-old university student and activist from **Eswatini**. He has been detained for two years after being arrested under Eswatini's *Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008*. Police arrested him at his family's home on January 16, 2024, without a **warrant**, and in front of his relatives. There is no evidence that he planned, encouraged, or carried out any violence. His **charges** seem to be connected to his peaceful **student organizing**.

There are also concerns about how his arrest and detention were handled. Important legal steps required by the Suppression of Terrorism Act were not followed, such as keeping proper custody records, giving clear reasons for the arrest, and meeting time limits for holding someone. The case was also started without the written approval from the **Attorney General**, which is required for certain charges.

Records show that the investigation continued for months after his arrest, meaning the case was not fully ready even though he had already lost his freedom. On September 30, 2025, he was denied **bail**, even though people are normally presumed innocent until proven guilty. These issues raise questions about whether his rights under Eswatini's **Constitution** were respected. I urge you to immediately release Menzi Bongeka Bhembe and to drop all charges against him.

Sincerely,



Photo Top Left: Eswatini Police via AIUSA.

Photo Bottom Left: Menzi Bongeka Bhembe via AIUSA.

Photo Right: Map of the continent of Africa, highlighting Eswatini.

Learn More About Menzi

In Eswatini, the arrest and continued detention of Menzi Bongeka Bhembe is part of a bigger problem. The government has been limiting people's rights and making it harder for citizens to speak out, **protest**, or join groups that call for change. One major issue is the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA) of 2008. The government often uses this law to label peaceful political activities as "**terrorism**," even when people are simply expressing their opinions.

The STA uses very broad definitions of what counts as terrorism. Because of this, many people such as **political opponents**, student leaders, **journalists**, and **human rights defenders**, have been unfairly targeted. Menzi's arrest is just one example of a larger pattern where the government uses the STA to justify arrests, **surveillance**, and keeping people in jail for long periods before **trial**.

Other serious events show this pattern too. In 2023, well-known lawyer Thulani Maseko was **assassinated**. In 2024, two members of **parliament**, Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube, were sentenced to extremely long prison terms, 85 and 58 years, under similar charges.

Amnesty International has repeatedly urged Eswatini to change or **repeal** the STA because it violates human rights protections found in important international agreements such as the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** and the **African Charter on Human and People's Rights**. These agreements guarantee basic freedoms such as the right to speak freely, gather peacefully, and have a fair trial.

Learning Activities

- [Vocabulary Chart](#)
- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Worksheet](#)
- [Tips for Letter Writing](#)