

PROTECTING AND
EXPANDING THE RIGHT
TO FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION FOR ALL

Campaign for Free Expression

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EXPRESSION TO HOLD SECOND ANNUAL ESWATINI FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SUMMIT

The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) has partnered with UN eSwatini, the Canadian High Commission, British High Commission and Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO) to host the 2nd edition of its annual Freedom of Expression (FoE) Summit aimed at discussing issues pertaining to the achievement of a democratic Eswatini.

This year's conference will take place on 15 June 2023 in Mbabane and is anticipated to bring together 150 delegates from a diverse pool of freedom of expression and human rights supporters in the country and internationally. Delegates will be drawn from political parties, the media, the diplomatic corps, multilateral organisations, civil society, government institutions, the private and public sector, youth and women organisations, cultural and artistic players, environmental activists, faith-based organisations, and academia, among others. It follows the successful hosting of the inaugural summit in October 2022, which gathered about 100 delegates made up of journalists, social and human rights activists, civil society, members of the academia and diplomatic missions among others, over two days.

The summit aims to build a representative coalition of organisations and individuals willing and prepared to defend FoE in the country. The focus this year is on the current human rights situation in eSwatini, how it has evolved and what needs to be done to turn the situation around. CFE Executive Director, Prof. Anton Harber is expected to open the summit. CANGO Executive Director, Thembinkhosi Dlamini, Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) Director, Nonhlanhla Dlamini, and Federation of the Organisations of the Disabled in Swaziland (FODSWA) President, Bongani Makama are amongst the panellists. Senior Human Rights Adviser at the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office Laila Nazarali, Deputy British High Commissioner to Eswatini Claudia Taylor and Clerico Constantino, representing the High Commission of Canada will also deliver speeches.

As a precursor to this year's summit, CFE and partners combined efforts with the National Association of Journalists (ENAJ) to host a two-day journalists' election coverage training workshop which kicked off on Tuesday 13 June 2023 at the George Hotel in Manzini. The workshop is set against the backdrop of the upcoming national elections in eSwatini, with a focus on building the capacity of at least 20 local journalists to integrate a human rights-based approach in their elections coverage by reporting independently, fairly, inclusively, and ethically. The need for heightened and targeted focus on freedom of expression as the umbrella of all human rights could not be more pronounced than during this time of transition, and growing calls for democratisation and respect for the rule of law.

Trainees for the workshop were drawn from mainstream media and freelancers, including print, broadcasting, online and web-based practitioners. The comprehensive course module will cover topics such as *Disinformation and fact-checking, The role and rights of the media during elections; Understanding freedom of expression, human rights, electoral law and processes as they affect media reporting, media ethics, human rights and diversity; and Ensuring gender equity and youth participation in the elections*, among others. The expected outcome is that participants will be well prepared for free, independent, inclusive, and tolerant media coverage that ensures accuracy, diversity of voices, gender equality, and the elimination of hate speech and incitement of violence.

In hosting the workshop and summit side-by-side, CFE and partners aim to encourage journalists to incorporate freedom of expression in their news coverage because when freedom of expression is protected, citizens are able to defend all their other human rights and governments can be held accountable.

CFE is grateful for the support from its partners: the UN in Eswatini, The Canadian High Commission, The British High Commission and CANGO.

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