

## MEDIA ALERT

25 OCTOBER 2022

# **ABOLISH THE ZULU AND SOUTH AFRICAN ROYALTY NOW**

## **GIWUSA Statement on the official certification of the Zulu King Misuzulu ka Zwelithini.**

On Saturday, Cyril Ramaphosa handed over the certificate of recognition of Misuzulu Ka Zwelithini, as the King of the Zulus, at the ceremony attended by 40 000 people at Moses Mabhida stadium. The ceremony was remarkable primarily for the extravaganza of the elite - local and foreign – engaged in childish pomp and celebration. But it cost of millions of taxpayer rands, standing in stark contrast to the horrendous conditions of life suffered by the great majority of Zulu working-class people, in whose name this new king is being coronated.

### **Lavish lives of Zulu and South African royals**

Since his recognition in March this year, the newly anointed King Misuzulu has been getting R1 277 116 as an annual salary, in line with hand-outs for Kings in terms of the Government report on remuneration of public servants. In addition, the Zulu royal household this year received R66 million from the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government, a sum down by R5 million from a year earlier. This splashing out on the Zulu royal household allocation is used to maintain and cater for six royal palaces, including a fleet of luxury cars for the royals, payment of royal aides and praise singers, school fees for royal children in the country's top schools, amongst others.

This is even more remarkable in the context of the province that is failing to provide for communities devastated not only by the devastating floods early this year, but that hasn't bothered to repair damage from the floods of 2019 and 2017, or from the rioting of July 2021. Financial shortfalls even prevent sewage pipes from being repaired, leading to such high E.coli counts in the ocean that the Durban beaches remain shut with the summer tourist season threatened.

These gifts to Misuzulu exclude benefits from financial interests and tens of millions of rands in returns from the family's irrational control of the Ingonyama Trust, a vast corporate entity for which the King is a sole trustee. The old KwaZulu Bantustan represents 2,8 million hectares of land, or 30% of land in KZN, and Ingonyama owns it supposedly in the name of the Zulu people that in reality it swindles. The trust was formed after an unlawful transfer of traditional communal land by the apartheid regime in its last days in 1994. The transfer was part of the cynical ploy by the apartheid regime to shore up the position of the Zulu royalty, in the post-apartheid period. The transfer was facilitated by Gatsha Buthelezi and his reactionary Inkatha Freedom Party, which had acted as mercenary counter-revolutionary shock troopers against the mass democratic movement that brought an end to the vile system of apartheid. The deal made between the white and incoming black nationalist elites to assimilate Buthelezi in this manner was considered one of the worst stains on the new democracy.

## **The financial burden of the parasitic South African royalty**

Although Zulu royalty is certainly the most prominent, it is by no means the sole parasite on the public fiscus and the working-class people of this country. Other royals amongst Xhosas, Pedi, Ndebele, and across the country's vast rural landscape receive generally less but alongside them, they fleece the country's public fiscus of billions of rands in undeserved salaries and benefits.

In 2018 there were 14 principal traditional leaders including Kings and Queens across South Africa, costing the country R250 million in salaries alone. But in addition to these there are 844 senior traditional leaders across 8 provinces excluding Western Cape, with over 277 in KZN alone, and over 5300 tribal chiefs and headmen or women, that are also on the government payroll.

It is shocking but not surprising that not only the ruling ANC but the entire political spectrum of the ruling class, from the left wing to the right-wing neoliberal opposition, support this misuse of public funds by obsolete parasites. The right-wing opposition in particular are exposed for their shameful hypocrisy. These are same parties that are relentlessly campaigning for cuts in public spending on social services for the poor and in the wages of public servants providing essential services. Every rightwing party opposes trade union demands for wage increases, and instead demands that the ANC must cut these public servant's wages more rapidly and savagely. Only a formidable trade union resistance has prevented this, in spite of the union movement's divisions.

The country's conservative forces oppose decent wages for teachers who educate our children; doctors, nurses and community healthcare workers who care and work for our health; social workers and psychologists on the frontline of the struggles against the social and mental health crises of capitalism in working-class communities; ESKOM workers who generate, transmit and distribute electricity to households; and many others.

Yet these same parties were scrambling for a seat at the coronation of the Zulu monarch and year after year vote for budgets including increased salaries and perks for traditional leaders who contribute absolutely nothing meaningful to society. They do not advance industry, sciences, arts, material, social and psychological welfare of humanity, including communities in whose name they claim all entitlements and privileges of their offices.

These are people whose sole claim to public office is the bloodline. They assume public authority based not on any expertise but being born of someone who claims to have been born of another one with a similar claim to have been born of another one with the same pretensions and nothing else. There are so many of their ancestors who got where they are by cozying up to colonial and apartheid masters. They get paid for mostly living a life of complete idleness, and contributing nothing to society and communities but a useless decorum. At worst, they are upholding an oppressive regime against the poor, women and other marginalised groups. They facilitate land dispossessions of the rural communities by big mining and other corporations profiteering from privatization of developments on community lands. In the case of the late King Zwelithini, his most remarkable memory for many was when he catalysed months' worth of

xenophobic attacks when he termed immigrants “lice” who should “pack their bags” in February 2015.

### **Treacherous colonial creatures of British Imperialism and apartheid**

Many people struggling to find justification for the role of the traditional royalty appeal to the cultural patriotism of the working class, to argue that these institutions are part of African culture, as if they define Africanness.

Firstly, it is vital to point that the institution of royalty is not unique to Africa. Many Europeans including former colonisers of this country, the British, have monarchy. Their thievery and role in the slave trade is easily documented, and reparations owed by the Windsor family are being demanded with increasing vigour. The current British royals are condemned by their black-in-law Meagan Markle for such racism that she and Prince Harry went into exile, and Prince Andrew had to settle a lawsuit after sexual abuse of an underage victim when he was consorting with convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

The same elite degeneracy is to be found in many countries dating throughout human history. African royalty, like their counterparts everywhere, are part of world historical process that arose under certain conditions, in which initially they may have lifted society to greater heights of progress through the centralisation of power and construction of major public works projects. But more recently, they have been a brake on human progress across most of the world.

In Africa, including South Africa, since the advent of colonialism, these institutions were subverted, from institutions of traditional authority, autonomy and resistance against colonialism, into puppets in the service of imperialism and settler colonial regimes. In KwaZulu itself, the origins of the kingdom were in Shaka’s Mfekane retreat from the Portuguese slave trade. But the Zulu royalty ceased to exist as an independent Kingdom after the historic defeat of heroic warriors at the battle of Ulundi, in 1879. It was only by the force of the Boer settler colonialists that Mpande, was able to claim the title. His successor Cetshwayo was crowned by the British colonialist, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and despite attempts to reclaim some of his traditional authority, he could barely maintain his rule other than by supporting British colonial forces.

All subsequent Zulu kings trace their lineage from these colonial interventions in the Zulu traditional authority. These interventions not only broke the thread that tied the current line of succession, but qualitatively altered the essence of the institution itself. Since then, the Zulu royalty has served at the pleasure and in the service of British Imperialism and then the white minority apartheid regime.

In doing so, the Zulu royalty not only effectively seized to be the traditional authority of precolonial Zulu Kingdom, but the sworn political enemy of the working class and progressive sections of Zulu nation that carried on the tradition of anti-colonial resistance and national liberation struggle against apartheid.

The shameful role of the Zulu royalty and its KwaZulu Bantustan authority under its traditional Prime Minister, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, during the historic Durban strikes of 1973 and his bloody

suppression of the independent black trade unions that developed subsequently are evidence of this counter-revolutionary role. It was for this role, and general service to the apartheid regime, that the last act of F.W. de Klerk's crumbling apartheid government was the handover of 2,8 million hectares of land in KZN to the deceased father of the current King, King Zwelithini.

But this is not unique to KZN. The Swazis, Pedi, Venda, Ndebele and Xhosa Kingdoms amongst others are no exception. The Swazi relatives are not only maintaining an extremely repressive absolute monarchy that is as filthy rich as it is bloody. It is also these puppet regime that aided the British imperialism in defeating the BaPedi Kingdom in 1881. The latter not only lost its independence. Like their Swazi foes and counterparts amongst AmaMpondos and Thembus, they were subjugated and subordinated to the service of the apartheid regime.

### **Oppression of rural people after 1994**

To continue the traditional patriarchal authorities in the post-1994 period is an insult by the ANC government to the rural masses who sacrificed so much in support of the ANC in its struggle against apartheid and especially against those puppet chiefs whose successors the ANC now calls representatives of the traditional communities. In addition to Zulu royalty, recently crowned incumbents in Sekhukhune and Eastern Cape succeeded Queen Mankopodi of Bapedi and Sqcawu of Amampondo. These are notorious puppets of apartheid regimes who enabled a land tenure system that was fiercely and heroically resisted by their people in the 1958 Sekhukhune and Pondoland rebellions. In the Pondo rebellion, King Botha Sigcau barely survived being killed by his own people who in their tens of thousands expressed their opposition to his collaboration with Bantu authorities.

King Both Sigcau and his successors, including his daughter, the late ANC Minister Stella, served as Prime Ministers of Transkei Bantustan Authority that brutally suppressed people fighting for freedom against apartheid regime. It is this royalty that transformed Transkei into a labour-reserve slave colony for the mining industry, that it still is, to this day. To suggest that this royalty – which made slaves out of proud AmaMpondo people – is a continuation of traditional authority that embodied independence and proud traditions of anti-colonial resistance is an insult to the memory and people of Pondoland.

Under the ANC, as it was during the colonial and apartheid era, these royalties are used to keep the rural masses under subjugation and deprived of the most elementary rights guaranteed by the constitution. The ANC need them like colonial and apartheid regimes did, to facilitate, politically legitimise and give credence to dubious bourgeois legality that in turn codifies colonial-style land dispossessions of the indigenous landowners and rural communities.

In Xolobeni, Eastern Cape, in Lesetlheng and many communities in Bakgatla Ba Gafela, and in Phokeng, North West and many others in Limpopo, and many mining areas, the local residents are in open revolt against traditional authorities who are used by mining corporations to dispossess communities of their land and deprive them of the right to say no to mining.

Royalties of Bafokeng and Bakgatla including Bakgatla Ba Kgafela and Bakgatla ba Mmakau (Motsepes) in North Wests have become filthy rich, and part of Africa's billionaire class, whilst people of Phokeng and Bakgatla living atop the Northwest Province platinum belt suffer in

abject poverty and hunger. These royal families are ruthlessly exploiting their people in the land they supposedly hold for their trust.

It is the same with Ingonyama Trust, which has been exploiting people who have been living on their land for generations, through unlawful taxations. In a court case brought by the Rural Women's Association, the Supreme Court declared leases that the trust entered with the residents to be unlawful. It was estimated that the Trust had received R106 million between 2007 and 2016/7, unlawfully and through extortionate leases.

### **GIWUSA demands**

It is the position of GIWUSA that the existence and recognition of traditional royalty as a public authority in a republican democracy is not only a waste of enormous amounts of resources but an affront and subversion of the democratic foundations of the country, for which many people laid down their lives in the struggle against successive colonial and apartheid regimes.

We therefore demand:

- Cancel salaries and all public funding for traditional leaders, authorities and hangers on. Use the funds saved from these to settle the demands of the public servants for decent wage increases and to fund a rapid roll out of backlogged services and development in rural areas.
- Expropriate the Ingonyama Trust, and similar Trusts of the Royal Bafokeng, Bakgatla and other corporate schemes held by traditional authorities everywhere. Vest all the land in the people it rightfully belongs to, with collectively-owned, democratically-controlled and socially-managed communal property associations to take over administration of all communal lands.
- Dissolve all royal institutions, with all non-elected traditional royalty to be divested of any public authority. All those who wish to continue with traditional authorities can be allowed to do so, on the basis that they are reconstituted only as voluntary cultural associations without any public authority.
- No public funding for traditional authorities. Any further funding of traditional authorities for those which want to continue as voluntary associations should only be derived from voluntary contributions of their members like churches, social clubs, etc. Levies to communities, royalties from mining companies, etc. should be entrusted to the democratically-elected structures in the rural areas, and used for the collective benefit of communities.
- Community assemblies, democratically-organised community civics and interest groups for young people, rural women, etc. must be recognised as the only legitimate voices of communities during public consultations on law-making, applications for mining licenses and other development projects in rural areas.

**Issued by GIWUSA**

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