

Russia's Lavrov Pledges Security Training to Eswatini

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during a meeting with Eswatini's Foreign Minister Thuli Dladla.
Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service

Russia's top diplomat on Tuesday pledged security training to Eswatini, just days after the brutal murder of a leading human rights lawyer and opposition politician.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was speaking in the landlocked country, Africa's last absolute monarchy, a day after visiting neighboring South Africa and just two days after Thulani Maseko was shot.

"Russia is prepared to assist Eswatini in training of security personnel, improving food production and also assistance on other issues of mutual cooperation," Lavrov told reporters.

Following talks with Eswatini's prime minister and other cabinet members, he said 50 Eswatini security personnel were studying at Russian defense universities.

Responding to a question on the political crisis in Eswatini, the minister said "as a matter of

principle, we do not interfere with the political situations of any country."

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"We are here to promote our good relations, to create the best atmosphere for implementation of practical projects from the ground — industry, agriculture, information communication technologies and many other things," he said.

The weekend killing of Maseko has sparked worldwide condemnation.

Maseko, 52, was shot dead on Saturday night by unknown attackers at his home around 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the capital Mbabane, an opposition spokesman told AFP.

He was shot through the window while he was inside with his family.

Maseko, a leading human rights lawyer and columnist, was the founder of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF), a coalition of opposition parties, associations and churches.

Maseko's death came just hours after the king challenged activists fighting to end Africa's last absolute monarchy.

"People should not shed tears and complain about mercenaries killing them," King Mswati had said.

In 2014, Maseko was jailed for contempt of court over articles critical of the government and judiciary but was acquitted on appeal and released a year later.

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