

More self-censorship at '*Times*'

The *Times of Swaziland*, the kingdom's only independent daily newspaper, has for the second day running [since 9 May 2012], censored itself in its reporting of King Mswati III.



On Wednesday, 9 May 2012, the *Times* reports on a Gallup poll that asked Swazi people whether they approved of the King's leadership. According to the newspaper, the King 'received a majority vote from the Swazi people'.

The publication follows a report in the *Times* on Tuesday, 8 May, that the Swazi Government had received only 40% of Swazi approval in the same Gallup poll. The *Times* made no reference to the King's poll rating in that report.

The newspaper was criticised by Swazi Media Commentary for censoring itself by not reporting the poll result for King Mswati, who is sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch.

The *Times* responded with its report on the King's rating. But, although the report says the King received a 'majority vote' of his people, it does not give the figures.

That is because the King received only 56% approval - another 43% of the Swazis interviewed by Gallup disapproved of the King's leadership. The real story is not the number who approve of the King, but the 43% who disapprove.

In Swaziland, the mainstream media do not allow any criticism of the King. Instead they are likely to play up the importance of the King and report that his subjects unreservedly love him.

Also, the King has strict control over his subjects' lives, especially the 75% who live in rural areas. Chiefs of areas are the King's representative and they can decide who is able to live and work in the area. If you criticise the King, you upset the chief, and you can be sent into exile.

This means that when people have criticisms of the King, they keep them to themselves.

So, the fact that more than four in ten people are prepared to tell a Gallup pollster they disapprove of the King's leadership is a significant development and might encourage others who have been too scared to voice their objection.

The newspaper knows this and that's why it censored itself in the report.

Source: [allAfrica](#).

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