

**Another Statement by the National University of Lesotho Community on the Instances of
Torture, Maiming, Instilling Fear, Intimidation, Brutal Murders and
Violation of the Sanctity of the Courts of Law Gripping the Nation**

July 2nd 2015

TO: His Majesty King Letsie III
Lesotho Parliament
Lesotho Government
Amnesty International
Commonwealth Secretariat
African Union
International Criminal Court
Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat
SADC Facilitator
US Embassy
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
European Union Mission to Lesotho
UN Agencies in Lesotho
Dean of Diplomatic Corps in Lesotho
South African High Commission
College of Chiefs
Christian Council of Lesotho
Lesotho Council for Non-Governmental Organisations
Congress of Lesotho Trade Unions
Leaders of Lesotho Political Parties
MISA—Lesotho
COSATU
National Union of Mine Workers - SA

We, the undersigned members of the National University of Lesotho Community, wish to make the following Statement to Basotho and the International Community:

The murder of Maaparankoe Mahao, on Thursday 25 June, 2015, shocked many sectors of Basotho nation. Adding onto the brutal killings of Sub-Inspector Ramahloko in August 2014; Mohau Qobete in February 2015; Thabiso Tšosane in May 2015; the ongoing abductions and torture of army personnel; intimidation and flight of some of their legal representatives; the flight of opposition party leaders; and intimidation, threats and flight of media personnel. The sum total of these and others confirms, against the adamant denial of insecurity by the Prime Minister, the current picture of a reign of terror and fear in Lesotho where:

- ❖ Basotho considered opponents of the regime are executed and their executors are not caught;
- ❖ Abductions, torture, maiming and killings have been unleashed against those considered opponents of an army general, and the government turn a blind eye on claims that 'it is an army matter';
- ❖ Unknown individuals menacingly park vehicles near houses of those considered opponents of the regime with an aim to intimidate owners of such houses;
- ❖ Hooded soldiers present tortured and bleeding soldiers at courts of law;
- ❖ Courts of law have little difficulty allowing torturers to keep their abductees;

- ❖ An army general drives about in a convoy like a Head of State, or Head of Government, and motorists are intimidated into treating him as such—even the King, Prime Ministers’ convoy do not drive on the wrong side of the road in Lesotho; and Cabinet Ministers humble themselves to traffic laws;

This, unfortunately, is what Lesotho has become in 2015 under the Seven (7) Party Coalition Government. We are supposed to be a country governed under the rule of law. We are supposed to be a nation where people’s rights are guaranteed by a constitution. We are supposed to be a country where the actions of government and conduct of all public officers are accountable in accordance with the law.

The government wants the Basotho people and the International Community to believe that there is no problem of security in Lesotho. Against the background of fear and intimidation that Basotho live with everyday, these words are hollow.

The government seems quite content to allow a situation where Basotho are ruled in accordance with the whims of rogue elements in the army. This, the government tells us, ‘It’s an army matter’.

The soldiers who are tortured, maimed, and killed are Basotho men—sons of their mothers; fathers of their young children; husbands of their wives; brothers of their siblings; relatives of many who are bound to them by blood, by humanity and as our people say “*Re amana ka khomo*”. Like everybody else, they have rights to life, they have rights to freedom from torture; and they have rights to fair trial where they are deemed to have committed any wrongdoing. Contrary to what the government seem to want the nation to believe, these men are not anybody’s playthings whose owner can do as (s)he wishes with them, separately from their rights under the constitution of this country. Contrary to what Ministers seem to think, in joining the army, these men were not required to renounce their constitutional rights. And they did not do so.

The government have deemed it proper to give the nation and Mahao’s family an explanation that their loved-one was killed in a scuffle. The impartiality of this government in this case would always be doubted, given that:

- a) the army had concocted a case intended to remove Mahao from the army— but dismally failed to adduce evidence for their allegations; and
- b) soon after coming to power, the government had also launched its own witch-hunt against him.

Be all that as it may, only a heartless and callous regime would tell a bereaved family that their loved-one was killed in a scuffle resisting arrest. Those are the words by which Mahao’s executioners probably justify their murder. To the government, to publicise them in an official statement gives them legitimacy, and suggests government has accepted them as adequate to explain away the brutal execution. An impartial government could have investigated circumstances of Mahao’s assassination to garner versions of all sides before publishing the

words of his killers as the only explanation. How can we, under this circumstance, expect the government's just adjudication on the matter?

As we have done in the case of Thabiso Tšosane, the abduction and torture of army personnel, and the violation of the sanctity of the courts of law, we appeal to Lesotho's friends to put pressure on the Lesotho government to:

- 1) Direct the LDF commander to immediately arrest and surrender members of the members LDF who executed: i) Sub-Inspector Ramahloko on duty at the Police Headquarters during the attempted coup in August 2014, ii) Mohau Qobete, Security Officer on duty at the Ministry of Education and Training in February 2015, and iii) Maaparankoe Mahao in an ambush near Mokema in the company of his nephews on June 25th 2015 to the police so that they are expeditiously prosecuted.
- 2) Cause the arrest and surrender of LDF conspirators and their civilian accomplices to the Police so that they are expeditiously prosecuted for their implicated role in the attempted coup of August 2014;
- 3) Expedite investigations, arrest and bringing to book the executors of Thabiso Tšosane ambushed in May 2015;
- 4) Bring to justice perpetrators of torture, maiming and murder of army personnel;
- 5) Stop illegal acts of surveillance and intimidation against private citizens;
- 6) Restore the good name of Basotho and Lesotho among friends of Lesotho, which the government seems hell-bent to damage in the narrow interests of individuals in certain political parties;

Failing which the Coalition Government should resign.

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