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AIRLINES**

Lesedi Private Academy Tops 2025 Rankings as Lesotho's Best Private School

BY: Seipati Matobo

Lesotho's private education sector has received renewed spotlight following the release of the 2025 Best Private Schools in Lesotho rankings by Schoolbell.net, a global platform specialising in education data and institutional reputation analysis. Leading the list this year is Lesedi Private Academy, which secured the number one position with a perfect Contextual Reputation



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TOP 10 PRIVATE SCHOOLS — IN LESOTHO — 2025 RANKINGS

Measured by Contextual Reputation Score

Source: Schoolbell.net

#1	LESEDI PRIVATE ACADEMY	100.0
2	Soofia International School	99.7
3	American International School of Lesotho	98.9
4	Maseru Private Academy	97.5
5	Annabelle School	95.7
6	Busy Bees English Medium School	93.3
7	College of Montessori for Children	90.4
8	Machabeng International School	87.0
9	Montessori International School	83.0
10	Caledon English Medium School	75.0

How schools were ranked

- Digital credibility
- Online authority
- Institutional reputation
- Local education context

Metric: Contextual Reputation Score

Private education remains a key pathway
to global academic mobility in Lesotho.



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Mass rape allegations at Vodacom funded LDF Boot Camp

Mofomobe calls for commission of enquiry

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho is confronting one of its most disturbing public-interest controversies in recent years, following serious allegations of sexual abuse at the Lesotho Defence Force BOOT Camp programme, a youth initiative financially sponsored by Vodacom Lesotho. The controversy was formally escalated this week after Machesetsa Gabriel Mofomobe, a Member of Parliament, wrote to Vodacom's Chief Executive Officer demanding that the company suspend or reconsider its sponsorship of the programme. In his letter, dated 27 December 2025, the MP raises grave concerns about exclusion, financial accountability, and, most seriously, allegations of rape involving young female participants. The BOOT Camp programme, run by the Lesotho Defence Force, is presented as a nation-building initiative aimed at instilling patriotism



and discipline among the youth. While few dispute the value of discipline and civic responsibility, questions are now being asked about whether the programme's implementation has fundamentally failed the very young people it claims to serve.

Exclusion dressed up as patriotism

One of the first issues highlighted is access.

Participation reportedly requires a fee of M2,500, a cost that effectively excludes many youths from poor and vulnerable households. This has fuelled criticism that a programme branded as patriotic and national in character is, in practice, accessible only to families who can afford to pay.

The concern is compounded by Vodacom's

dominant position in Lesotho's telecommunications market. Many parents whose children are excluded are themselves Vodacom subscribers, raising uncomfortable questions about a corporate-funded programme that appears to benefit a narrow segment of society.

Financial opacity

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raises alarms

Beyond access, there are serious governance concerns. According to the MP's letter, there is no evidence that the BOOT Camp programme has undergone an independent audit or that audited financial statements have been made public. More troubling are reports that participation fees are deposited into MPESA accounts registered in the names of individual facilitators, rather than into an account formally registered under the LDF.

For a programme associated with a constitutional institution, this arrangement raises fundamental red flags around financial controls, accountability, and compliance with basic public-sector governance standards.

Allegations of rape force a national reckoning

The most explosive aspect of the controversy centres on allegations of sexual harassment and rape of young female participants by members of the LDF. These allegations are not speculative. The LDF spokesperson has

publicly confirmed that a soldier has been arrested on suspicion of sexually harassing a BOOT Camp participant.

According to Mr Mofomobe, these matters only surfaced after he publicly demanded accountability. Following his intervention, two additional young women reportedly approached him personally, alleging that they too were raped while participating in the programme. If substantiated, the claims point to a catastrophic failure of safeguarding in an environment where minors were placed under military authority.

A crisis in a country already scarred by sexual violence

These allegations unfold against a grim national backdrop. Lesotho continues to grapple with endemic sexual violence. Official police and health sector data consistently record well over a thousand reported rape cases each year, many involving children. Experts and civil society organisations warn that these figures represent only a fraction of actual incidents, as fear, stigma, and mis-

trust of institutions keep many survivors silent.

In such a context, any youth programme, particularly one involving authority figures and closed environments, carries an elevated duty of care. The BOOT Camp allegations suggest that duty may have been grossly neglected.

Corporate ethics under scrutiny

In his letter, the MP calls on Vodacom to suspend or reconsider its sponsorship until all allegations are independently investigated, perpetrators are identified and held accountable, finances are transparently audited, and robust safeguards are put in place to ensure participant safety and equal access. The appeal strikes at the heart of corporate citizenship. Vodacom publicly commits itself to ethical conduct, transparency, and respect for human rights. Its parent company, Vodafone Group Plc, makes similar commitments globally. Whether those principles extend beyond branding and into difficult local realities is now being tested.

Civilian justice, not

closed doors

The MP has also written to the Prime Minister, in his capacity as Minister of Defence, calling for a Commission of Inquiry into the BOOT Camp programme. Crucially, he insists that alleged perpetrators be investigated by the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, rather than being handled internally by the military, to avoid any perception of cover-ups or conflicts of interest.

A defining moment

What began as a youth discipline programme has now evolved into a defining test of accountability for both a powerful corporation and a powerful security institution. For the young women who allege they were abused, the issue is not public relations or institutional reputation. It is justice, dignity, and protection.

For Vodacom and the LDF, the question is no longer whether the allegations are embarrassing. It is whether they will act decisively to confront them, or allow silence and delay to deepen a crisis that Lesotho can no longer afford to ignore.

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Polihali Dam Hits Critical Height as Africa's Largest Water Transfer Project Enters Peak Construction Phase

By: Staff Reporter

The Power Construction Corporation of China (POWERCHINA) has confirmed a major construction milestone at the Polihali Dam in Lesotho, with the dam reaching full-section fill to its design elevation of EL.1977 metres, equivalent to a structural height of 65 metres.

The achievement, reached on 6 December 2025 and formally announced by POWERCHINA later in the month, marks the transition of the region's largest water diversion control initiative into its peak construction phase. Located in Lesotho's Mokhotlong District, the Polihali Dam is the centrepiece of Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), a landmark bi-national partnership between Lesotho and South Africa aimed at strengthening long-term water security, energy resilience and regional economic development. The project is implemented by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) and is widely regarded as one of southern Africa's most ambitious examples of transboundary infrastructure cooperation. To mark the milestone, a high-level delegation of more than forty representatives visited the construction site, includ-



ing Mokhotlong District Administrator Mr Keba Kepe, Principal Chiefs and Members of Parliament. The delegation was accompanied by LHDA officials and members of the international supervision team, who observed the mechanised embankment filling process and concrete works on the intake tower. Speaking during the visit, Mr Kepe described the milestone as a defining moment in Lesotho's national development trajectory, underlining the dam's strategic importance to both countries' water and energy needs. He expressed confidence that timely delivery of the project would translate into lasting socio-economic benefits for communities in the highlands and beyond.

Once completed, the Polihali Dam will impound water from the Senqu River and channel

it through an extensive tunnel network into South Africa's Vaal River system. The reservoir is expected to significantly enhance water supply reliability for Gauteng Province, the continent's most industrialised urban region, while also supporting hydro-power generation within Lesotho.

Engineering experts and project stakeholders have consistently framed the Polihali development as a practical demonstration of regional partnership and shared benefit. The project reflects a governance model grounded in joint planning, consultation and mutual contribution between neighbouring states, supported by international contractors and financiers. POWERCHINA's role at Polihali forms part of a broader pattern of large-scale infrastructure collaboration across Africa, particularly in water and

energy sectors where Chinese firms have become prominent partners in projects aligned with national and regional development priorities. Beyond its engineering scale, the Polihali milestone has been interpreted by analysts as a signal of growing African agency in infrastructure delivery. Increasingly, African states are asserting greater influence over project design, sequencing and implementation, while engaging global partners on negotiated and strategic terms. However, as construction accelerates, observers caution that environmental management, social safeguards and equitable water governance remain critical. Sustained transparency, community participation and ecological oversight will be essential to ensure that the project's long-term benefits are broadly shared, particularly by highland communities directly affected by the reservoir.

If delivered as planned, the Polihali Dam is expected to enhance livelihoods across both Lesotho and South Africa through improved water availability, job creation and expanded economic activity. Its progress reinforces a growing continental commitment to cooperative, rules-based and inclusive management of shared natural resources, setting a notable precedent for future regional infrastructure

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IEC Appointments Delay Sparks Constitutional Alarm

By: Staff Reporter

MASERU

The political party Yearn for Economic Sustainability (YES) has formally petitioned the Council of State to proceed without further delay in advising His Majesty King Letsie III on the appointment of three commissioners to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), warning that the continued inaction has no legal basis and risks undermining constitutional governance.

In a letter dated 23 December 2025, addressed to the Senior Private Secretary of the Council of State, YES argues that all constitutional requirements for the appointment process have already been met and that there is currently no lawful impediment preventing the Council from discharging its advisory role under Section 66(4) of the Constitution of Lesotho.

According to the party, the Forum of Political Parties lawfully submitted a list of five nominees to the Council of State on 30 October 2025, from which three commissioners are to be appointed by the King acting on the advice of the Council, as prescribed by the Constitution.

YES further notes that recent litigation brought



by Tumisang Mosotho and Peshoane Tsikoane-challenging aspects of the process was dismissed by the High Court of Lesotho, and crucially, that no application for a stay of execution or suspension of the judgment was filed thereafter.

“In law, this means there is currently no legal impediment, court order, or lawful restraint preventing the Council of State from proceeding,” the party states in its submission.

Warning of unconstitutional delay

The YES letter characterises any continued delay in the appointment of IEC commissioners as unconstitutional, arguing that holding the process in abeyance without a subsisting court order or statutory authority is inconsistent with the Constitution.

The party cautions that such delay risks setting a dangerous precedent where constitutional obligations are suspended indefinitely without judicial sanction, thereby weakening institutional accountability and public confidence in governance structures.

Local government elections at risk

The matter is described as one of national urgency, particularly in light of Lesotho’s trajectory toward local government elections in several electoral divisions where councils have lapsed.

According to YES, the absence of a fully constituted IEC directly frustrates the country’s ability to hold timely elections, depriving affected communities of representation, service delivery oversight, and democratic participation on an

equal footing with other electoral divisions.

“The absence of commissioners at the IEC directly frustrates this constitutional and democratic obligation,” the letter reads.

Call for immediate action

YES emphasises that the Forum of Political Parties followed an agreed, transparent, and algorithmic method in submitting the list of nominees, and that any further delay not only prejudices democratic processes but also erodes public trust in constitutional institutions.

The party has therefore urged the Council of State to proceed without further delay and advise His Majesty to appoint the three IEC commissioners so that the Commission may function fully ahead of the forthcoming local government elections.

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Rape in Lesotho is not rare. The data shows it is systemic

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho has long struggled with sexual violence, but beyond the headlines and court reports lies a body of credible data that paints a far more disturbing picture. Research by government institutions, international agencies and independent surveys consistently points to a society grappling with entrenched patterns of sexual abuse, under-reporting and weak accountability. The evidence suggests that sexual violence in Lesotho is not an isolated phenomenon but a systemic problem sustained by social norms, institutional gaps and a culture of silence.

What the numbers say

Data collected over the past two decades places Lesotho among the countries with the highest reported levels of sexual violence globally. A United Nations-supported survey of police statistics in 2008 recorded Lesotho as having the highest incidence of reported rape among participating countries. While police data captures only reported cases, it provided an early warning of the scale of the crisis.

More comprehensive population-based research has since reinforced those concerns. A national demographic and health study conducted in 2009 found that 61 percent of wom-



en reported experiencing some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, while 22 percent reported having been forced to have sex. These figures remain among the most alarming in the region.

Recent estimates by UNFPA and UN Women suggest that more than 80 percent of women and girls in Lesotho experience gender-based violence at some point in their lives, a category that includes rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence and coercion.

Violence begins early

Sexual violence in Lesotho often begins in childhood. Peer-reviewed research using nationally representative data shows that one in seven adult women

and one in twenty adult men reported experiencing sexual violence before the age of 18. Among adolescent girls aged 13 to 17, a significant proportion reported sexual abuse within a single year.

These findings point to sustained vulnerability among children and young people, raising questions about family structures, community protection and institutional safeguards. Researchers note that early exposure to sexual violence increases the likelihood of repeat victimisation later in life and contributes to long-term physical and psychological harm.

The culture beneath the crimes

Beyond prevalence, surveys also examine attitudes

that shape how sexual violence is understood and responded to. Afrobarometer findings show that a majority of Basotho regard gender-based violence as a serious national problem. However, a troubling minority continue to express beliefs that normalise force or justify violence within intimate relationships. Social scientists describe this combination of high prevalence, harmful attitudes and weak accountability as characteristics of what is commonly referred to as rape culture. This does not imply universal acceptance of violence, but rather a social environment where sexual abuse is frequently minimised, ex-

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cused or quietly endured. Such norms help explain why many survivors do not report assaults. Fear of stigma, retaliation, family pressure and distrust in the justice system remain powerful deterrents.

The justice system gap

Even when cases are reported, prosecution rates remain low. Lesotho Tribune investigations in 2025 revealed that 91 rape cases were brought before the courts in the first four months of the year alone, yet convictions remain disproportionately few relative to reported incidents. Human rights advocates point to investigative delays, poor evidence handling, intimidation of complainants and limited

survivor support services as recurring obstacles. Rural victims face additional barriers, including distance from police stations, lack of transport and limited access to medical and psychosocial care.

Institutions under scrutiny

Reports by UNDP and local civil society organisations consistently argue that sexual violence in Lesotho cannot be addressed solely through policing. They emphasise the need for coordinated responses across education, health, justice and traditional leadership structures. Schools, churches, initiation spaces and even state institutions have periodically been implicated in allegations of abuse, further complicating

efforts to build trust and accountability.

Why the data matters

The persistence of sexual violence statistics over decades suggests that Lesotho's challenge is not a lack of awareness, but a failure to translate data into sustained action.

While campaigns against gender-based violence are regularly launched, experts warn that short-term interventions cannot dismantle deeply rooted social patterns.

Data, when consistently ignored, risks becoming background noise rather than a catalyst for reform.

As one gender rights researcher put it in a recent UN briefing, sexual violence in Lesotho is not only a criminal justice

issue but a national development crisis, with direct consequences for public health, education outcomes and economic participation.

A national reckoning still pending

The evidence is clear and increasingly difficult to dismiss. Sexual violence in Lesotho is widespread, begins early and is reinforced by social and institutional weaknesses. Addressing it requires more than condemnation after each incident. It demands sustained political will, survivor-centred justice, cultural introspection and accountability across all levels of society.

Until then, the data will continue to tell a story that the country has yet to fully confront.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Lesotho speaks often about food security, yet far from policy rooms and conference halls, the country is bleeding food after it has already been grown. The loss does not happen during planting or harvesting. It happens in the quiet hours after crops leave the soil. Post-harvest losses have become one of the most underestimated threats to Lesotho's ambition to one day become a net producer of the food it consumes.

Across farming communities, the story repeats itself. Vegetables harvested in the

FARMERS CORNER

How Post-Harvest Losses Are Quietly Crushing Lesotho's Food Security Ambitions



morning are stacked under the sun by mid-day. By evening, prices have collapsed or produce has already begun to spoil. Farmers who have done everything right in the field find themselves punished at

the point of sale. What should be a moment of reward turns into a scramble to avoid total loss.

The problem is not that Lesotho cannot grow food. The problem is that it cannot keep it.

For perishable crops such as leafy greens, tomatoes, cabbage and potatoes, time is unforgiving. Without cold storage, pack houses or organised transport, farmers must sell im-

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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporters

Zimbabwe's economy expanded by 9.64 percent year on year in the third quarter of 2025, according to new data released by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT). The figure marks a significant increase from the 2.28 percent growth recorded during the same period in 2024, reflecting what officials described as a broad-based recovery across key sectors of the national economy.

Speaking at a press briefing in Harare, ZIMSTAT's national accounts manager Grown Chirongwe said the performance underscored the resilience and gradual stabilisation of the economy following years of volatility. He attributed the rebound to improved

production conditions and sustained activity in both goods-producing and service-oriented industries.

Chirongwe noted that the upturn was primarily driven by robust performance in mining and quarrying, manufacturing, finance and insurance, wholesale and retail trade, and agriculture. These sectors, he said, benefitted from a combination of favourable weather patterns, increased investment in production capacity, and policy adjustments aimed at improving macroeconomic stability.

In a recent statement, the



International Monetary Fund (IMF) observed that Zimbabwe's economic recovery in 2025 had been stronger than anticipated, with expectations that the growth momentum will continue into 2026. The IMF highlighted that this positive trajectory is being reinforced by fiscal reforms, currency management efforts, and rising commodity exports.

Economists have suggested that the figures should be read with cautious optimism, noting that while headline growth is encouraging, structural vulnerabilities remain. Persistent inflationary pressures, limited access

to external financing, and the need for further policy coherence continue to pose challenges to long-term stability.

Observers also emphasise the importance of assessing these developments within a wider African economic context, where several nations are navigating recovery amid shifting global market dynamics and local structural adjustments. Zimbabwe's performance illustrates the potential of African economies to sustain growth through domestic resilience and regional cooperation, even in the face of external headwinds.

The third-quarter results, therefore, not only signify a turning point for Zimbabwe but also contribute to a broader narrative of African economic agency, challenging simplified portrayals of the continent's financial systems. The data highlight the nuanced and diverse realities of national recovery paths that extend beyond conventional metrics of growth.

For more details, visit the official ZIMSTAT website and the IMF report on Zimbabwe.

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EDITORIAL

What Basotho Chose to Read in 2025 and Why It Matters



15

Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

If readership is a form of quiet voting, then Lesotho Tribune's most-read stories this year offer a revealing ballot paper. They tell us less about algorithms and more about anxieties, frustrations, and expectations in a country searching for accountability, stability, and meaning in its public life.

What Basotho read most in 2025 was not celebrity gossip or fleeting spectacle. It was power. How it is exercised, abused, resisted, and sometimes corrected. Stories that interrogated corruption, governance failures, and institutional conduct consistently drew the strongest attention. Court judgments against powerful boards, questions about whether corruption reports would ever be debated in parliament, and forensic examinations of state-linked financial insti-

tutions dominated readership charts. These were not passive clicks. They were signals of a public that understands, perhaps more clearly than its leaders do, that governance failures are not abstract. They shape livelihoods, services, and dignity. Legal and constitutional stories also resonated deeply. Readers followed judicial decisions closely, not

merely for their outcomes, but for what they revealed about the balance of power in the state. In a political environment where executive authority is often contested and blurred, the courts have become both arena and referee. The public appetite for such stories suggests a society paying close attention to the rule of law, precisely because it feels fragile.

Economic reporting with depth, not platitudes, also found its audience. Analyses of banking practices, development finance, and the uneasy fit between imported ESG frameworks and Lesotho's real development needs proved popular. This is telling. It suggests a readership no longer satisfied with growth slogans or glossy

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mediately, regardless of market conditions. When supply is high, prices fall sharply. When supply is low, shelves are filled with imports. The local farmer absorbs the loss either way.

This fragile system quietly undermines confidence in agriculture. Each season of losses discourages farmers from expanding production. Some reduce planting. Others abandon horticulture altogether. Young people watching this instability draw a simple conclusion that farming is too risky to be worth the effort.

The country then finds itself in a cruel cycle. Domestic production exists but remains unreliable. Imports rise to fill the gaps. Prices stay vulnerable to external shocks. Meanwhile, locally grown food continues to rot before it reaches consumers. At the heart of this crisis lies infrastructure that stops at the farm gate. Support to agriculture in Lesotho has focused heavily on inputs and training, yet far less attention has been paid to what happens after harvest. Cold rooms are scarce. Rural

feeder roads remain poor. There are few aggregation centres where produce can be graded, stored and marketed collectively. Processing facilities that could absorb surplus production are largely absent. Without these systems, farmers carry all the risk while value quietly leaks out of the economy.

Institutions such as Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security continue to emphasise production targets and self-sufficiency. But increasing production without addressing post-harvest losses only increases waste. More

food grown without systems to preserve it simply means more food lost.

The dominance of imported produce on Lesotho's shelves is often blamed on scale and pricing. What is less acknowledged is the power of systems. In neighbouring markets, cold chains, logistics and contracts reduce losses and stabilise supply. In Lesotho, farmers compete against this without the tools to protect their harvest. The result is predictable. Local produce becomes seasonal and inconsistent. Imports appear cheaper and

more reliable, even when they travel hundreds of kilometres to reach local markets. Post-harvest losses do not make headlines like droughts or subsidies. They unfold quietly, crate by crate, season by season. Yet their cumulative impact is devastating. They drain farmer incomes. They weaken rural economies. They erode national food security without drawing public attention.

This is why post-harvest loss is a silent killer. It does not destroy crops in the field. It destroys confidence, investment and long-term viability.

Lesotho does not lack land or farmers. It lacks a serious commitment to storage, logistics and market coordination. Until these gaps are addressed, the country will continue importing food it already grows and wasting food it claims to value. Food security is not only about producing more. It is about protecting what has already been produced. Until that truth is confronted, Lesotho's ambition to feed itself will remain just that, an ambition rather than a reality.

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strategy documents. People want to know who benefits, who carries the risk, and whether policy language matches lived reality.

Perhaps most striking is what did not dominate. Sensationalism, when it appeared, did not outperform substance. Instead, explanatory journalism and critical analysis consistently held attention. Even in sport and culture, the most read pieces were those that connected events to broader social meaning, not those that merely entertained.

Taken together, these patterns point to a readership that is politically alert, economically anxious, and increasingly sceptical of

authority without accountability. It is a public that understands that institutions matter, that systems shape outcomes, and that silence is rarely neutral.

This places a responsibility on the media, and particularly on Lesotho Tribune. Popularity is not merely validation. It is obligation. When readers consistently choose investigations over distractions, analysis over slogans, and accountability over comfort, they are asking to be taken seriously. The year's most-read stories also expose a deeper truth. Lesotho is not suffering from political apathy. It is suffering from political disappointment. People are paying attention. They are reading. They are watching institutions closely. What

they are not seeing often enough is reform that matches the scrutiny. As the year closes, the message from readers is clear. They want journalism that names problems honestly, explains systems patiently, and refuses to normalise dysfunction. They are not asking for pessimism. They are asking for seriousness. In 2026, the challenge will not be to chase attention. It will be to deserve it. If the stories Basotho read most this year tell us anything, it is that the public is already ahead of the politics. The question is whether leadership, and the institutions that support it, are willing to catch up.

As the country moves into 2026, the challenge is no longer awareness but

response. Institutions must learn to treat scrutiny as a democratic duty, not an inconvenience. Parliament must debate what the public is already discussing. Regulators must enforce rules they routinely recite. Political leaders must accept that legitimacy now depends less on authority and more on accountability. For its part, the media must continue to interrogate power with patience and evidence, not outrage. And citizens, having shown through their reading choices that they care deeply about how the country is governed, must insist that attention translates into reform. Democracy does not fail for lack of information. It fails when information is ignored.

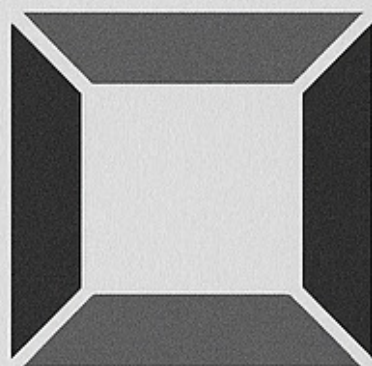


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Law Society President raises alarm over arrest of former First Lady brother, cites settled Constitutional Court ruling

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The President of the Law Society of Lesotho, Lintle Tuke, has expressed concern over what he describes as questionable and potentially unlawful conduct by the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, the prosecution and the Magistrates' Court following the arrest and detention of a young man, Tsebang Ramoholi, allegedly for insulting Lesotho Defense Force commander by telephone.

In a Facebook post, Tuke said official police communications indicate that Ramoholi was arrested for a telephonic insult, criminally charged and brought before court on 22 December, where he was denied bail. He said the circumstances of the arrest and prosecution raise serious legal questions, particularly in light of long settled constitutional law. Tuke reminded the country that criminal defamation and criminal insults were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Lesotho nearly a decade ago, following the prosecution of former Lesotho Times editor Basildon Peta.

Constitutional Court ruling on criminal defamation

The matter arose from Peta v Minister of Law, Constitutional Affairs and Human Rights, a case stemming from the criminal prosecution of Peta after the publication of an article involving the then



commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, Lt Gen Tlali Kamoli.

In its judgment, delivered by a full bench of Justices Mokhesi, Mahase and Moiloa, the Constitutional Court struck down provisions of the Penal Code that criminalised defamation, holding that they violated the constitutional right to freedom of expression guaranteed under section 14 of the Constitution.

The court found that the offence was overly broad and vague, and that it created a chilling effect on free expression, particularly for journalists and members of the public engaging in debate on matters of public interest. It noted that criminal liability could arise even where no one other than the complainant had heard the alleged defamatory statement, a position the court said could not be justified in a democratic society. The judges further criticised the extension of criminal defamation to statements concerning deceased persons and found the statutory defence of

“public benefit” to be imprecise and susceptible to abuse.

On the role of the media, the court stated that the press is entitled to wide latitude when scrutinising public officials, including the use of robust language, satire and provocation. It emphasised that public figures must tolerate a higher degree of criticism than private individuals.

The court ultimately declared criminal defamation unconstitutional, confirming that disputes relating to reputation and insult must be pursued through civil litigation rather than criminal arrest or detention.

Questions over continued arrests

Tuke said the legal position has been settled for many years, yet arrests and prosecutions for alleged insults and defamation continue to be reported. “This legal position has been settled for nearly a decade,” he said, questioning whether the persistence of such cases reflects a lack of understanding of the law by those tasked with enforcing it.

Legal practitioners have warned that continued reliance on unconstitutional offences undermines the rule of law and exposes the state to potential civil liability for unlawful arrest and detention.

At the time of publication, the police and the prosecution had not publicly responded to the concerns raised by the Law Society President.

Legal explainer: what the law says on insults and defamation

Are insults and defamation crimes in Lesotho?

No. Criminal defamation and criminal insults were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. They are no longer criminal offences.

What does this mean in practice?

The police cannot arrest or detain a person solely for allegedly insulting or defaming another person.

How should disputes about reputation be handled?

They must be pursued through civil courts. The aggrieved person may sue for damages or other civil remedies.

Who should not be involved?

Police, prosecutors and criminal courts should not be used to settle disputes about insults, defamation or reputational harm.

Why did the court strike down criminal defamation?

The court found that it violated freedom of expression, was vague and overly broad, and had a chilling effect on journalism and public debate.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

Lesotho Rugby 7s have announced their growing presence on the regional stage with a standout performance at the Khan's Rugby 7s Festival in South Africa, where both our national teams claimed gold and silver medals in a highly competitive tournament.

The women's team once again proved their class by successfully defending their title, overcoming Mozambique's side in the final to secure the gold medal. Their composed and very dominant display confirmed their status as one of the most consistent teams at the festival. Not to be outdone, the men's team delivered a strong campaign of their own, finishing second place overall and taking home the silver medal after a series of hard-fought matches.

ARTS & SPORTS

Lesotho's Rugby 7's Make a Statement in South Africa



Officials from the Lesotho Rugby Federation (LRF) showed lots of praise for both teams, highlighting their discipline, commitment, and increasing improvement. The performances were seen as a reflection of the Federation's investment in player development and long-term planning. Off the field, the LRF continues to strengthen its operational capacity. The Federation utilized M107,000 from a World Rugby Grant to purchase key event-support equipment, including tents, toilets, a public address (PA) system, and a trailer. These resources are

expected to enhance the hosting of rugby events and provide somewhat a better logistical support for national teams.

In this celebratory moment for the Federation, the LRF president officially presented national team regalia to newly appointed technical director Ronald Doyle, marking the start of a new chapter in Lesotho rugby's technical leadership. With their momentum building, rugby officials have expressed confidence that Lesotho's 7s teams are on a promising path toward qualifying for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. The

results in South Africa were described as another important milestone in that journey.

The Federation also announced that the newly acquired equipment will be available for hire to other national federations and sports associations, in order to support sport development while generating additional revenue.

Lesotho Rugby 7s continue to collect silverware and strengthen their foundations, and their message is clear: the nation's rugby ambitions are no longer just potential, they are continuously taking shape on the field.

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