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# Pseudo-Revolutionaries Stopped From Self-Dealing



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**MOHAHLAULA**  
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# Pseudo-Revolutionaries Stopped From Self-Dealing

High Court rules Parliament cannot vote to ignore the Constitution, orders lawmakers to pass conflict-of-interest law within 12 months.



By: Lesotho Tribune

MASERU

In a judgment that cuts straight to the heart of political power and accountability in Lesotho, the High Court has ruled that Parliament cannot simply vote away a constitutional obligation designed to stop politicians from profiting from government contracts, declaring that lawmakers

acted unconstitutionally when they rejected a bill meant to regulate conflicts of interest among Members of Parliament. The ruling, delivered on 5 March 2026, orders the National Assembly to enact legislation regulating conflicts of interest within twelve months, bringing to an abrupt halt what the court effectively described as Parliament's attempt to sidestep the Constitution.

The constitutional challenge was brought by Honourable Teboho Mojabela, together with the Basotho Covenant Movement (BCM) and the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD). They sought judicial intervention after the National Assembly rejected the Conflict of Interest Bill, 2024, a private member's bill that sought to bar politicians with financial interests in government contracts from serving in

Parliament.

The respondents in the case included the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Law and Constitutional Affairs, and the Attorney General.

In a strongly worded decision, the three-judge bench made it clear that while Parliament has the power to debate and vote on legislation, it

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# “They Chose Silence”: Couple Accused of Killing 8-Year-Old Await High Court Verdict

By: Tholoana Lesenya

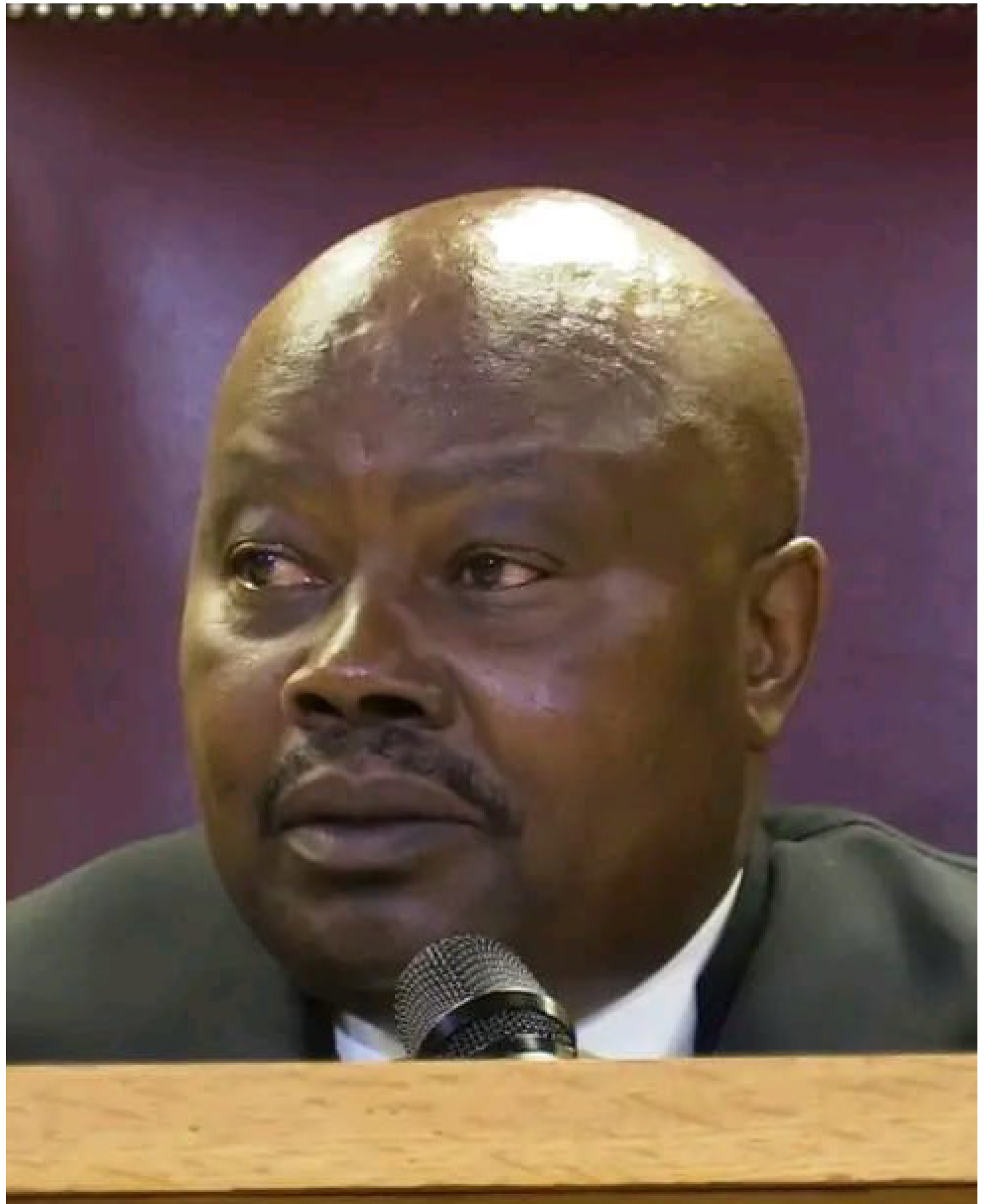
## MASERU

The High Court is expected to deliver a closely watched judgment next week in a case that has gripped the nation following the tragic death of eight-year-old Liteboho Sekokotoana in Ha Leqele last year. Justice Tšeliso Mokoko will hand down the ruling on Thursday in the trial of Motšeleli Maoeng and John Lefoka, who stand accused of murdering the young child.

The two accused were in a romantic relationship at the time of the incident. Maoeng had been working as a domestic worker at the Sekokotoana family home.

The charges stem from an incident that allegedly occurred on April 7, 2025, at the family residence in Ha Leqele, Maseru.

In addition to the murder charge, the pair are also accused of attempting to kill Liteboho's older brother, Lereko Sekokotoana, who was 15 years old at the time. They further face a charge of theft for allegedly stealing property belonging to the Sekokotoana family.



The High Court heard testimony from several witnesses during the trial before the prosecution formally closed its case earlier this week. One of the key witnesses was forensic pathologist Dr. Lefatle Phakoana,

who presented medical evidence on the cause of Liteboho's death. Dr. Phakoana told the court that the child died from suffocation. According to his findings, the medical cause of death was asphyxia

caused by smothering. His testimony formed a crucial part of the state's case as prosecutors sought to establish how the child died and whether the death result-

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cannot use the mechanism of voting to defeat obligations imposed by the Constitution itself.

“The Constitution is the supreme law of the land,” the court emphasized, adding that all branches of government are bound by it.

**The Bill That Sparked the Constitutional Battle**

The dispute traces its origins to November 2024, when Dr Tšepo Lipholo, a member of the National Assembly, introduced a private member’s bill known as the Conflict of Interest Bill, 2024.

The bill sought to implement provisions contained in Section 59(1)(e) of the Constitution of Lesotho, which deals with disqualification from membership of Parliament where an individual holds interests in government contracts. Its purpose was straightforward: to prevent situations where politicians participate in government decisions while simultaneously benefiting from state contracts. After the bill was properly introduced, seconded and debated in Parliament, it was defeated by a majority vote of Members of Parliament present in the chamber. That decision triggered the constitutional challenge which ultimately reached the High Court. **Parliament’s Defence** During the proceedings, Parliament argued that the courts should not interfere in the internal workings of the legisla-

ture.

The Speaker of the National Assembly maintained that parliamentary decisions taken in accordance with standing orders are protected under the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers, which requires the judiciary, legislature and executive to operate independently.

According to Parliament’s argument, once a bill has been debated and voted upon in the National Assembly, the matter should be considered closed.

However, the court rejected this interpretation.

**Court: Parliament Cannot Defeat the Constitution**

The judges held that although Parliament has the authority to vote on legislative matters, it cannot use that power to defeat the Constitution. Allowing Parliament to vote down legislation that the Constitution requires it to enact would effectively permit lawmakers to nullify constitutional obligations by simple majority vote. Such a situation, the court warned, would undermine the supremacy of the Constitution.

The court therefore concluded that the National Assembly’s decision to reject the Conflict of Interest Bill amounted to non-compliance with a constitutional mandate.

**The Meaning of “May”** A key issue before the court was the interpretation of the word “may”

in Section 59(1)(e) of the Constitution.

Parliament argued that the word suggests discretion, meaning lawmakers could decide whether or not to enact legislation dealing with conflicts of interest.

But the court ruled that within the context of the Constitution, the word must be interpreted as creating a duty rather than a choice.

Without such legislation, the constitutional safeguard designed to prevent politicians with financial interests in government contracts from serving in Parliament would remain meaningless.

**Guarding Against Abuse of Power**

The court also addressed the broader rationale behind the constitutional provision.

Individuals who hold commercial interests in government contracts while occupying political office face strong incentives to influence public policy for personal gain. The Constitution therefore anticipates a legal framework to prevent such conflicts and protect the integrity of the state.

In its reasoning, the court noted that individuals with commercial interests in government could potentially use their positions to secure or protect contracts with the state, a situation that undermines public trust in democratic institutions.

**A Direct Order to Par-**

liament

Having found Parliament’s conduct unconstitutional, the High Court issued a mandamus order compelling the National Assembly to enact conflict-of-interest legislation within one year.

While Parliament remains free to determine the specific content of the law, it cannot refuse to enact legislation altogether, the judges ruled. **A Defining Constitutional Moment**

The judgment is likely to become one of the most consequential constitutional rulings in recent years.

It reinforces the principle that constitutional obligations cannot be ignored by political majorities and that the courts remain the ultimate guardians of the Constitution.

For years, governance experts and civil society organisations have raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest within Lesotho’s political system.

The High Court’s decision now forces Parliament to confront that issue directly.

Whether lawmakers comply with the ruling or attempt to resist it could determine the next chapter in Lesotho’s evolving constitutional democracy.

For now, however, one message from the judiciary is unmistakable: Parliament cannot vote its way out of the Constitution.

### Continued from page 4

ed from a deliberate act. After the prosecution concluded its case, both accused exercised their constitutional right to remain silent. They chose not to testify in their defence and did not call any witnesses. The defence therefore closed its case without presenting evidence from the accused themselves. The trial then moved to final arguments, where both sides addressed the court on how the evidence should be interpreted.

Prosecutor Advocate Thato Lepheana argued that the evidence presented by the state was strong enough to secure a conviction.

She told the court that the prosecution had proven its case beyond reasonable doubt and that the accused had failed to challenge critical parts of the evidence presented by state witnesses.

According to her submissions, the accused did not put their version of events to witnesses during cross-examination, leaving much of the prosecution's evidence uncontested.

Advocate Lepheana also rejected any attempt to rely on intoxication as a defence.

"The accused intentionally and negligently got intoxicated and then committed the offences

they are charged with. They therefore cannot raise the defence of intoxication," she told the court.

She further argued that the evidence suggests the accused were aware of their actions and understood the consequences at the time.

Voluntary intoxication, she said, should not excuse criminal responsibility.

The prosecution therefore urged the court to convict both accused on all charges.

However, the defence argued that the evidence does not support a conviction for murder.

Advocate Pelele Ntori, representing Maoeng, submitted that the court should instead consider convicting the accused of lesser offences.

He suggested that the appropriate verdict would be culpable homicide, assault and theft, rather than murder, attempted murder and theft.

Advocate Ntori emphasised that the burden of proof lies entirely with the prosecution and that the accused are not legally required to testify.

"The accused are not obliged to give an explanation," he told the court while addressing their decision to remain silent.

He also argued that intoxication played a role in the incident and affected the judgment of

the accused.

According to him, their mental state at the time meant they did not have a direct intention to kill the child.

However, Ntori acknowledged that the accused acted together during the incident. He told the court that the defence accepts the legal concept of *dolus eventualis*, meaning the accused may have foreseen the possibility that their actions could result in death but proceeded anyway.

Advocate Nketsi Makhera, who represents Lefoka, echoed a similar argument.

He told the court that the accused did not plan to kill the child and that the evidence suggests their primary intention was to steal from the house.

If the accused foresaw the possibility of death occurring, he argued, it would fall under *dolus eventualis* rather than direct intent to kill.

Makhera also reminded the court that the accused have a constitutional right to remain silent.

"Silence does not mean admission of guilt," he said.

Earlier in the trial, the court admitted several witness statements into the record.

These included statements from Liteboho's parents, Lillo Sekokotoana and 'Malithakong

Molupe, who described the events surrounding the tragic incident.

The court also heard testimony from a neighbour, Mothibenyane Letsosa, who provided information related to the events of that day. Another key witness was the deceased child's brother, Lereko Sekokotoana.

Lereko, who was 15 years old at the time, is also the alleged victim of the attempted murder charge faced by the accused. His testimony helped the court piece together what happened inside the house on the day of the incident.

With all evidence and arguments now concluded, the matter has reached its final stage. Justice Mokoko will now consider the evidence, legal arguments and applicable law before delivering judgment.

The court will determine whether the prosecution has proven the charges of murder, attempted murder and theft beyond reasonable doubt, or whether the accused should instead be convicted of lesser offences as proposed by the defence.

The judgment, scheduled for next Thursday, is expected to mark a critical moment in a case that has deeply affected the Sekokotoana family and drawn widespread public attention across the country

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# Treason Trial Resumes Next Week

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The High Court will next week continue hearing a long-running criminal case in which two senior politicians, a former army commander and several soldiers stand accused of treason and other serious offences connected to the events of August 2014.

The matter, which has drawn national attention for years because of its political and security implications, is scheduled to proceed on Monday before Justice 'Maliepollo Makhetha.

Among those standing trial are the leader of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and former Deputy Prime Minister Mothetjoa Metsing, the leader of the Movement for Economic Change (MEC) who is also the current Minister of Health Selibe Mochoboroane, former army commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and soldiers Litekanyo Nyakane, Motlohelo Ntsane and Leutsoa



Motsieloa.

They face several charges and their alternatives including treason, murder, and attempted murder, risk of injury or death and aggravated assault. All the accused have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The case stems from incidents that allegedly took place on the night of August 29 and into the early hours of August 30, 2014, when members of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) allegedly launched coordinated attacks on several police installations in Maseru.

According to the charge sheet, the alleged offences were carried out by the accused persons acting together and in furtherance of a shared purpose. The prosecution alleges that they worked together with the late Tefo Hashatsi, Bulane Sechele, Tumo Lekhooa and other persons.

The charges include the murder of Sub-Inspector Mokheseng Ramahloko, a member of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), who was fatally shot during the events. The accused are also

charged with the attempted murder of Letsekang Mothibeli together with alternative counts relating to the same incident. Additional charges relate to aggravated assault allegedly committed against several police officers including Sergeant Mahanetsa, Lance Sergeant Thabiso Kopa, Lance Sergeant Shaabe Thamae, Police Constable Mokete Litulo and Police Constable Mone. Some of the accused face additional charges. The counts of treason,

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# Lesotho Welcomes New UN Representatives

By: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Lejone Mpotjoana, has welcomed two new representatives from the United Nations to Lesotho. On Wednesday, Mpotjoana received the Letters of Credence of Taija Mari Johanna Kontinen-Sharp as the United Nations Resident Coordinator to the Kingdom of Lesotho. In receiving Kontinen-Sharp's credentials, Mpotjoana reaffirmed Lesotho's commitment to working with the United Nations to achieve sustainable development. He expressed optimism that Kontinen-Sharp's leadership will strengthen collaboration between Lesotho and the UN, particularly in advancing inclusive governance, sustainable development and expanding opportunities for all Basotho.

The Minister also received the Letters of Appointment of Alankar Malviya as Country Director and Representative of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to Lesotho. Malviya will oversee UNAIDS operations in Eswatini, Lesotho and South Africa and will be based in Pretoria. Mpotjoana praised the continued alliance be-



tween Lesotho and UNAIDS in coordinating and strengthening the national HIV response. Lesotho has made significant progress in combating HIV and AIDS, achieving the 95-95-95 HIV treatment targets in 2024. The government is committed to working with UNAIDS and other stakeholders to consolidate gains made and end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

The Government of Lesotho values its companionship with the UN system, which is aligned with the country's national development priorities.

The UN's support has been instrumental in Lesotho's progress towards achieving sustainable development and improving the lives of its citizens.

Kontinen-Sharp expressed her commitment to working closely with the Government of Lesotho to elevate the country's development agenda. She vowed to aid Lesotho's efforts to achieve its development goals and improve the lives of its people.

Malviya also expressed his commitment to strength-

ening UNAIDS' partnership with Lesotho, particularly in the areas of HIV prevention, treatment and care. He pledged to work closely with the government and other stakeholders to ensure that Lesotho achieves its HIV goals.

The presentation of credentials marks a new chapter in Lesotho's union with the UN. The Government of Lesotho looks forward to working with Kontinen-Sharp and Malviya to achieve its development goals and improve the lives of its citizens.

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attempted murder of Police Constable Moeketsi and alternative charges relating to risk of injury or death and aggravated assault, as well as the assault of Sub-Inspector Joel, are specifically brought against Kamoli, Nyakane, Metsing and Mochoboroane.

The prosecution alleges that the incidents formed part of coordinated attacks on police facilities and officers during the security crisis that unfolded in the country in 2014.

In recent proceedings, the court heard testimony from Lance Sergeant Shaabe

Thamae, a member of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service who was present during the shooting in which Ramahloko was killed.

Thamae told the court that he was with the late Ramahloko when members of the army allegedly opened fire during an operation that he said was aimed at disarming police officers.

According to his testimony, the shooting occurred while police officers were confronted by soldiers during the operation. The witness described the circumstances under which

Ramahloko was shot and the confusion that followed.

His evidence forms part of the prosecution's attempt to reconstruct what took place that night and to establish how the fatal shooting occurred.

The court also heard evidence from Inspector Liau Seeko, a crime scene investigator who presented a photo album documenting various scenes connected to the alleged attacks.

Seeko told the court that the photographs were taken at several police facilities that were targeted during the events of 2014.

The images were compiled as part of the police investigation and were meant to illustrate the extent of damage and activity at the locations where the incidents took place.

Following his testimony, the court conducted what is known as an inspection in loco, a process in which the judge and parties visit locations relevant to the case in order to better understand the evidence.

The inspection covered several sites including the Maseru Central

Charge Office, Police Headquarters, the Serious Crime Unit (SCU) offices at Pitso Ground Police Station and another police facility located at Ha Mabote. During such visits, the court observes the layout and physical environment of the locations discussed in testimony so that it can properly assess the evidence presented by witnesses.

The trial has been closely followed due to the high-profile nature of the accused persons and the historical significance of the events connected to the case. However, the defence team has strongly rejected the allegations brought against their clients.

Lawyers representing the accused have argued that the prosecution is using the case as a means of targeting the accused through the legal system.

According to the defence, the military operation that took place at the time was lawful and was intended to prevent violence and protect lives.

They maintain that their clients did not commit the offences alleged by the prosecution and that the evidence presented so far does not

support the charges. The defence has also insisted that the accused should not be portrayed as having acted unlawfully when the events occurred in a tense security environment.

As the trial continues, the court is expected to hear further testimony from witnesses as the prosecution seeks to strengthen its case.

The proceedings have already included evidence from law enforcement officers and investigators who were involved in responding to or investigating the incidents.

Both the prosecution and defence are expected to continue presenting arguments and evidence as the case progresses.

The accused are represented by a team of lawyers including Advocates Motiea Teele (KC), Letuka Molati, Lepeli Molapo, Kabelo Letuka and Napo Mafaesa.

The prosecution is being handled by Advocates Motene Rafoneke and Rethabile Setlojoane.

The trial continues before Justice 'Maliepollo Makhetha when the matter returns to the High Court on Monday.

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# LEN Continues to make headlines in Lesotho: A Promise of an HIV Free-Generation

By: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

The Ministry of Health has introduced a new HIV prevention option, Lenacapavir (LEN), as part of its comprehensive strategy to combat HIV. The introduction of Lenacapavir was announced at a Media awareness Workshop held in Maseru, where journalists were briefed on the importance and details of the new medicine.

HIV and AIDS Communication Expert and Health Promotion Head, Baroane Phenethi, said

Lenacapavir is a promising long-acting option that has the potential to change how individuals access and adhere to HIV prevention services. "Lenacapavir has a unique mechanism of action and an extended dosing schedule, which reduces the need for frequent health facility visits," he explained.

Phenethi highlighted the critical role the media plays in making the public understand health innovations.

"Scientific progress alone is not enough without truthful and responsible reporting," he said, warning that misinformation can undermine trust, fuel stigma, and slow pro-



gress in the fight against HIV. He urged journalists to report on Lenacapavir in a balanced, factual, and stigma-free manner.

Dr. Nthuseng Marake from the HIV and AIDS Programme described Lenacapavir as a highly effective, long-acting Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) that prevents people from being infected with HIV. "Clinical trials have shown strong protection and good safety outcomes," she said. She further explained that the dosing schedule includes an initiation phase with subcutaneous injections and oral tablets, followed by injections every

26 weeks.

The injection is administered in the abdominal area, and side effects are generally mild to moderate. Dr. Marake clarified that Lenacapavir is not a vaccine and does not cure HIV. "It is a long-acting prevention medicine that works while present in the body, and in some cases may also be used as part of treatment for people living with HIV," she said.

The Ministry of Health is working to ensure accurate information about Lenacapavir gets to the public. The introduction of Lenacapavir is a significant step in Lesotho's efforts to strengthen its

HIV prevention strategy and promote public health. Lenacapavir is expected to benefit people who struggle with daily pill regimens or who have difficulty accessing health-care facilities regularly. The long-acting nature of the medicine is expected to improve adherence to HIV prevention services and reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

The Ministry of Health urges individuals who are at risk of HIV infection to consult with healthcare providers to learn more about Lenacapavir and determine if it is a suitable option for them.

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# Officer Challenges Murder Prosecution

BY: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

A senior member of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) has approached the High Court sitting as the Constitutional Court to challenge a decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to prosecute him for murder.

Senior Inspector Tankiso Lethoko has filed an application arguing that the directive issued by the DPP ordering that he be prosecuted for the death of Ketšepile Moeletsi is unlawful and unfair. The case arises from events that occurred during a police investigation in Quthing in 2018.

According to court papers, Lethoko was part of a team from Police Headquarters that was sent to assist the Quthing Police in September 2018. The team was deployed following an operational order issued by the Commissioner of Police (COMPOL) after the murder of 'Mam-orolong Morolong and Liseloane Morolong. The two victims were killed at Pontšeng Ha Mosehle in Quthing, prompting an investigation that involved officers from different police units.



During the course of that investigation, Ketšepile Moeletsi, who was one of the suspects in the killings, died while in detention at the Mount Moorosi Police Station on September 25, 2018. His death raised serious concerns and allegations soon emerged that suspects who had

been detained during the investigation had been tortured by police officers.

As a result, an inquest was opened to establish the circumstances surrounding Moeletsi's death. Following the inquest proceedings, it was recommended that several police officers who

had participated in the investigation should face criminal prosecution. However, the Director of Public Prosecutions later issued a directive stating that Lethoko together with a limited number of officers should be prosecuted for the alleged

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murder of Moeletsi. The officers named in the directive include Senior Inspector Tshabalala, Sub-Inspector Kikine, Police Constable Sekopo, Police Constable Moshabe and Inspector Nkeane.

Lethoko has now turned to the Constitutional Court arguing that the DPP's decision is not being implemented in a fair and transparent manner.

In his application, he claims that the prosecution authority has selectively chosen certain officers for trial while leaving out others who were also recommended for prosecution during the inquest. He argues that this approach raises concerns about discrimination and fairness.

"By focusing on the applicant and a few members of his group as being cherry-picked for criminal trial and leaving aside the other police officers recommended for prosecution, the applicant is apprehensive that the DPP is maneuvering the system to achieve discrimination instead of addressing the demands in the recommendation of the inquest," Lethoko states in his court papers. He further argues that the DPP's actions could violate his constitutional rights if he is prosecuted without being allowed to challenge the directive first.

According to his application, there is a real threat of constitutional irregularity in the way the DPP is exercising her powers under Section 99 of the Constitution.

He says this is particularly important because the directive exposes him to prosecution under Section 31 (2) (f) and (g) of the Penal Code Act No. 6 of 2010. Because of this, Lethoko argues that he should be given an opportunity to challenge the directive before he is formally remanded and tried.

He says the issues raised in the case are complex and closely connected to the findings of the inquest that investigated the death of Moeletsi.

In his application, Lethoko is asking the court to temporarily stop the implementation of the DPP's directive. He specifically seeks an order staying the execution of the directive dated July 8, 2024, which authorised that he be remanded and tried for murder.

He also requests the court to prevent the DPP from filing an indictment against him under Section 119 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act No. 7 of 1981 while the matter is still being considered by the Constitutional Court. Beyond challenging the prosecution decision,

Lethoko is also asking the court to address the role played by senior police leadership during the investigation.

He wants the court to declare that the Commissioner of Police and the Officer Commanding the Quthing Police Station are vicariously responsible for the death of Moeletsi.

In addition, he is requesting that the court order the reopening of the inquest so that the magistrate who presided over it can consider evidence from the Commissioner of Police and the Officer Commanding Quthing Police Station.

According to Lethoko, the inquest did not fully address the responsibility of senior officers who oversaw the investigation.

He further asks the court to declare that the directive issued by the DPP is unlawful to the extent that it conflicts with the powers exercised by the Commissioner of Police under Section 147 of the Constitution.

He also seeks an order reviewing and setting aside the recommendations of the inquest, arguing that they were irregular. Another key argument raised in his application is that the DPP's decision to charge only six officers out of a larger group recommended for prosecution is unconstitutional.

He asks the court to declare the decision unlawful because it is inconsistent with Section 19 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law.

Lethoko also claims that the decision to charge him specifically amounts to an abuse of court process.

However, his attempt to have the matter heard urgently has not succeeded.

This week Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane removed the application from the roll of urgent cases after ruling that it did not meet the legal requirements necessary for it to be heard on an urgent basis.

The decision means that the application may still be heard by the court, but it will proceed through the normal court process rather than being treated as an urgent matter.

The case is expected to attract attention as it raises important questions about the conduct of police investigations, the role of the prosecution authority and the fairness of decisions to prosecute individuals in complex cases involving multiple officers.

The High Court will determine the issues raised by Lethoko once the matter is scheduled to proceed in the Constitutional Court.

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Lesotho Tribune

By Molefi Tsumane

Lesotho took a definitive step toward food independence.

This week, His Majesty King Letsie III appeared not only as the Head of State in Mahobong but also in his international capacity as the FAO Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition, to officially inaugurate the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre. For the King, the rows of deciduous fruit trees and the state-of-the-art pack-house represent more than just agriculture. They are a frontline defence.

“Our vision must align,” the King noted, emphasising that the fight against hunger and poverty is a national priority that mirrors global goals.

His tour of the orchards and sorting facilities signalled a royal endorsement of a transition from subsistence farming to a sophisticated, commercialised “Agri-business” model.

The atmosphere of the cel-

# FARMERS CORNER

## The King inaugurates the Horticultural Incubation Centre



ebrations of the centre was sharpened by a sobering reality check from Daniel Chakela, Vice President of LENAUVU and a representative for Lesotho farmers. Chakela linked the quiet fields of Mahobong to the volatile landscape of global geopolitics and international power struggles. In a fiery address, he warned that relying on long, fragile supply chains from distant nations leaves Lesotho vulnerable to shocks beyond its control. “A country that relies on imports will perish if it does not produce on its own,” Chakela cautioned. He issued a direct plea to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business, say-

ing “training is not enough as Basotho produce must be guaranteed space on the shelves of the nation’s major retail giants.”

For Chakela, the centre is the engine but secure market access is the fuel that ensures national resilience. This engine, he said, is powered by the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project, backed by the World Bank and a specific \$950,000 grant from the IBSA Fund (India, Brazil, and South Africa).

CAFI Project Manager, Chaba Mokuku revealed that the incubation is not just a future promise but a current reality, adding that over 200 small businesses,

largely owned by youth and women, have already been successfully incubated through the project. By transforming farming into a high-value professional career, the centre provides a direct answer to the nation’s high youth unemployment rate.

The goal of the project remains simple: to create a business-enabling environment that simplifies the path for a young entrepreneur to move from planting a seedling to becoming a national supplier, ensuring that the next generation of Basotho sees the land not just as a means of survival, but as a source of wealth.

# Farmers Struggle To Access Markets Despite Increased Production

By: Lemohang Botsane

Despite an increase in agricultural production in recent years, farmers in Lesotho are facing a major hurdle in accessing markets to sell their produce. This was revealed by the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, during a presentation at the Portfolio Committee on the Economic and Development Cluster.

Mofosi explained that even though production went up in the 2025/2026 financial year, the government was unable to buy all the grains from farmers, leaving many without a market for their produce. He also noted that some of the produce was not competitive in the market, making it difficult for farmers to sell.

To address this challenge, Mofosi strongly advised the need for constant training to inform and educate farmers. He revealed that the Ministry had started a regional exercise in 2025/26 to train farming input producers, with the aim of improving the quality and competitiveness of their produce.

The Minister also announced plans to hand over the sale of farming inputs to an Agent, who would sell them to farm-



ers, making it easier for them to access the inputs they need. This move is expected to promote accessibility and affordability of farming inputs, on the other hand benefiting farmers. However, the Ministry is facing some challenges, including a decline in revenue collection on importation due to a new system for permit issuance. Additionally, the ban on the importation of livestock and unprocessed meat from South Africa due to Foot and Mouth Disease has also affected the Ministry's revenue.

Despite these challenges, the Ministry remains

committed to backing farmers and improving agricultural production in Lesotho. The government is working to address the market access challenge and ensure that farmers have a reliable market for their produce. The issue of market access is a pressing one, and farmers are calling for urgent action to address it. Many farmers have expressed frustration at being unable to sell their produce, which has resulted in financial losses. The government has assured farmers that it is working to address the issue and provide them with the support they need.

In the meantime, farmers are advised to form cooperatives and work together to access markets and negotiate better prices for their produce. The government is also encouraging farmers to diversify their crops and explore new markets, both locally and regionally. The agricultural sector is a crucial part of Lesotho's economy, and addressing the market access challenge is crucial to its growth and development. The government is committed to supporting farmers and ensuring that they have the resources and support they need to succeed.

# EDITORIAL

## Iran, Persia and the Strategic Wisdom We Once Had

An editorial inspired by reflections shared by Joang Molapo



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Joang Molapo

In moments of global crisis, the temptation is always to reduce complex history into simple loyalties. Countries are sorted into sides. Narratives become slogans. Those who disagree are dismissed as sympathisers of one camp or another.

Yet sometimes a quiet reflection from an experienced observer forces us to pause and think a little deeper.

Former minister Joang Molapo recently shared a personal story recalling how his father, Lesotho's first ambassador to the Middle East, was posted to Tehran in 1974. At the time, the decision might have puzzled some. Why would a small African kingdom establish an embassy in Iran rather than in Saudi Arabia, the largest oil producer in the world?

The answer, as Molapo recounts, lay in something



that has become rare in modern politics: strategic thinking.

His father and an Iranian deputy foreign minister explained to a curious young boy that Iran was not simply another oil state. It was something far older and far deeper. Iran was Persia.

The civilisation we now call Iran predates Christianity by centuries. Long before the rise of Europe's modern states, the Persian empires had already built complex systems of governance, law and trade. Under dynasties such as the Achaemenids, Persia governed a vast multicultural empire stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indus Valley. It pioneered administrative systems, road networks and diplomatic practices that

historians still study today. Even the idea of respecting local cultures within a wider empire was practiced by the Persians thousands of years ago. When Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC, he famously allowed displaced peoples to return to their homelands and practice their religions freely. Some historians even refer to the Cyrus Cylinder as one of the earliest expressions of human rights. This long civilisational memory matters. Nations that carry thousands of years of history do not easily disappear from the geopolitical stage. Geography reinforces this reality. Iran sits at one of the most strategically significant crossroads in the world. It links the energy-rich Persian Gulf with

Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia. It borders multiple regions that have shaped global trade routes and political rivalries for centuries. Add to that a population far larger than most of its neighbours, and the result is a country that inevitably commands regional influence.

These were the realities that leaders such as Leabua Jonathan appear to have understood decades ago. Posting an embassy in Tehran was not simply a diplomatic choice. It reflected a recognition that Iran was, and would remain, a central actor in global geopolitics.

History proved that judgement correct.

The Iranian Revolution

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By Lesotho Tribune

MASERU

A recent Lesotho Tribune Sentiment Tracker poll has revealed that a majority of respondents who participated in the survey expressed support for Iran in the escalating conflict involving the United States and Israel.

The poll asked a direct question: “Who do you support in this conflict?” following reports that the United States and Israel had launched military strikes on Iran, a development that has significantly heightened tensions in the Middle East.

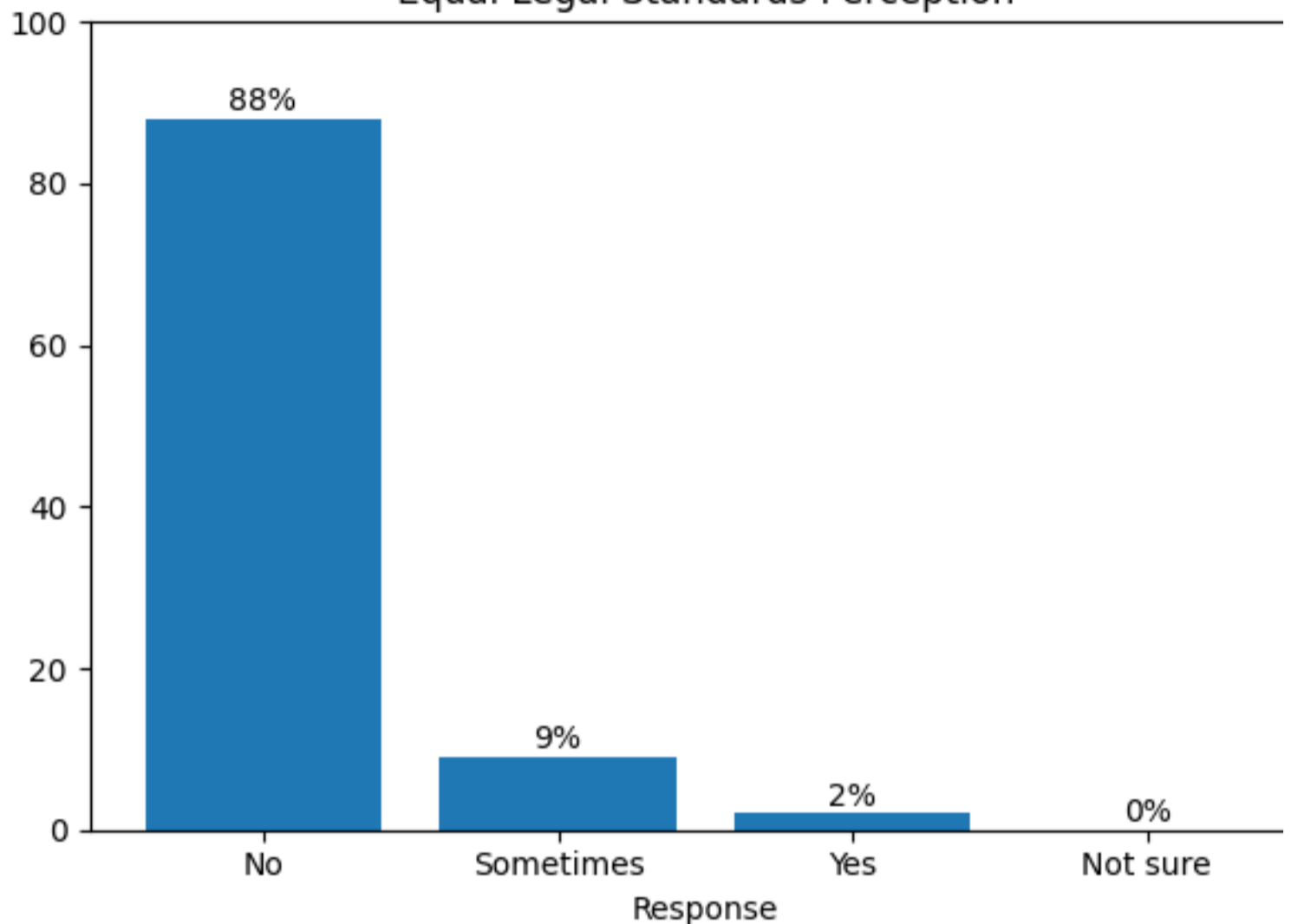
Out of 43 participants, the results showed a clear pattern in public sentiment. 67% of respondents said they support Iran, making it the dominant position among those who voted in the poll. Meanwhile, 14% indicated support for the United States and Israel, suggesting a much smaller segment aligns with the Western alliance in the conflict.

Another 12% of respondents said they support neither side, reflecting a position of neutrality or opposition to the conflict

# SENTIMENT TRACKER

## Basotho Poll Shows Strong Sympathy for Iran in U.S.-Israel Conflict

Lesotho Tribune Sentiment Tracker  
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itself. A further 7% indicated they are unsure, highlighting that some members of the public may still be forming their views as the situation evolves. Although the sample size is small and the poll is not a scientific survey, the results offer an interesting glimpse into how members of the Lesotho Tribune community are interpreting the unfolding geopolitical crisis. The strong level of sympathy for Iran may reflect broader global narratives that resonate across parts of Africa and the Global South, where skepticism toward Western military interventions has historically been common. Past conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere have often shaped public perceptions about international power dynamics, sovereignty, and

the role of major powers in global security.

At the same time, the presence of respondents who support neither side suggests that a portion of Basotho observers prefer a neutral stance, possibly prioritizing peace and diplomatic solutions rather than military confrontation. International analysts warn that any sustained military escalation between the United States, Israel, and Iran could have wide-ranging consequences beyond the Middle East. Global energy markets, trade routes, and geopolitical alliances could all be affected if tensions deepen.

For countries such as Lesotho, which are geographically distant from the conflict but economically connected to global markets, developments in the

Middle East can still have indirect consequences. Oil price volatility, shifts in international diplomacy, and broader global instability often ripple across smaller economies.

The Lesotho Tribune Sentiment Tracker is part of the publication's ongoing effort to capture public opinion among its readers on major political, economic, and international developments affecting the world.

As the situation in the Middle East continues to evolve, public opinion may shift depending on new developments on the ground, diplomatic efforts, and the broader international response.

Lesotho Tribune will continue monitoring public sentiment and global developments surrounding the conflict.

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dramatically altered Iran's political orientation. The fall of the Shah and the rise of a new Islamic republic reshaped alliances across the Middle East. But the revolution did not erase Iran's geography, its population, or its long civilisational continuity.

For the United States, the revolution meant the sudden loss of a key regional ally. Since then, Washington has spent more than four decades attempting to contain Iranian influence through sanctions and diplomatic isolation. The assumption was that economic pressure might eventually force political change.

Yet Iran endured. Sanctions strained its economy, but

they did not eliminate its regional relevance.

During the administration of Barack Obama, the world briefly witnessed a different approach. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action sought to bring Iran back into structured engagement with the global economy in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear programme. It was an attempt to influence behaviour through integration rather than confrontation.

When the agreement was later abandoned under Donald Trump, the strategy shifted back toward pressure and coercion.

Whether that shift will ultimately produce stability remains uncertain. What history consistently teaches, however, is that great civilisations do not simply

vanish because they are sanctioned or isolated. Iran is not merely a government or a regime. It is the modern expression of Persia, a civilisation that has existed for millennia. Culture, geography and history combine to ensure that it will continue to shape regional dynamics regardless of who governs in Tehran.

Perhaps the deeper lesson for Basotho lies closer to home.

Molapo's reflection reminds us that our own leaders once engaged the world with a sense of strategic awareness. Decisions were sometimes made with an eye on long historical currents rather than immediate political convenience. In today's political environment, that kind of think-

ing often feels absent. Too frequently we reduce international affairs to partisan talking points or ideological loyalties.

But the world is more complicated than that.

Understanding history.

Recognising geography.

Appreciating civilisational depth. These are the tools of serious statecraft.

Lesotho may be small, but thoughtful diplomacy and strategic awareness once allowed its leaders to read the global chessboard with surprising clarity.

Molapo's story is therefore not simply about Iran. It is a reminder that strategic thinking is possible, even from a small mountain kingdom, when leaders take the time to understand the deeper forces that shape the world.

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Gillian Schutte

**D**iplomacy depends on restraint. Rituals exist to preserve a minimum level of civility between states even during periods of conflict. Condolence books belong to that tradition. They acknowledge death and recognise the dignity of a grieving nation. Governments that hold serious disagreements still observe this practice because international relations requires discipline.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in South Africa recently informed foreign missions that a book of condolences had been opened following the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and senior Iranian officials during the recent United States and Israeli strikes on

# OPINION

## Ukraine's Diplomatic Impunity in Pretoria



Iran. Ukraine's ambassador to South Africa, Dr Olexander Scherba, responded publicly with a letter refusing to sign the condolence book. He accused Iran's leadership of responsibility for Ukrainian civilian deaths because Iranian-manufactured Shahed drones have been used by Russia during the war in Ukraine. He concluded that he would not express condolences for someone whose death he does not mourn. The refusal alone already

represents an unusual diplomatic act. The public tone of the letter transformed the episode into something more serious. The ambassador placed the death of a national leader inside a moral indictment directed at another state. The Iranian Embassy responded publicly on X to clarify the situation. The embassy explained that a note verbale had been sent to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and copied to the diplomatic corps rather than a personal invi-

tation directed at the Ukrainian mission. It also reminded diplomats that their role is not to incite hostility between peoples.

To explain its broader position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the embassy quoted the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa'di: Human beings are members of a whole, In the creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, Other members uneasy will remain.

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If you have no sympathy for human pain,  
The name of humans  
you cannot retain.

The verse forms part of Sa'di's Bani Adam, a work deeply embedded in Persian intellectual tradition. The poem is also inscribed in gold weave on the great Persian carpet displayed at the United Nations headquarters in New York, gifted by Iran to the organisation. The inscription stands as a reminder, within the very architecture of global diplomacy, that humanity shares a single moral condition.

The Russian Embassy in South Africa responded in far sharper language. In a statement posted publicly it wrote:

"We thought we had seen everything from the Ukrainian ambassador, but this goes even further. Mocking the deaths of hundreds of Iranians while claiming to be a person of faith can only come from someone with no conscience and no soul.

Can such people truly care about their own citizens? We doubt it." The controversy that followed reveals something larger than a dispute between diplomats.

Iran currently faces sustained military strikes across several cities. Iranian authorities report attacks on residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, schools and emer-

gency facilities. Civilian casualties have been reported across multiple provinces as the conflict expands. Yet the loss of civilian life in Iran receives limited attention in much Western media coverage of the conflict. Under such circumstances a refusal to acknowledge a condolence gesture directed at a nation experiencing loss raises serious questions about diplomatic conduct.

In earlier periods of diplomatic practice, conduct of this nature could easily have triggered recall or resignation. Ambassadors have historically been required to step down for statements far less provocative than publicly refusing condolences following the death of a head of state. Yet in the present case Dr Olexander Scherba appears able to operate with considerable freedom inside South Africa's public sphere.

The incident also exposes a deeper problem within South Africa's media environment. Dr Scherba has become a regular presence across several South African platforms. Newsroom Afrika frequently hosts him to discuss the Ukraine war. The Mail & Guardian publishes his commentary. These appearances often contain harsh denunciations of Russia and its partners.

Russian and Iranian

diplomats, rarely if ever, appear on these platforms.

Public discourse therefore unfolds through a narrow interpretive frame.

South Africa's official foreign policy moves in another direction. Pretoria has consistently emphasised negotiation and dialogue in global conflicts while maintaining relations with Russia, Iran and China through BRICS and other diplomatic frameworks.

Yet the domestic information environment often mirrors the geopolitical narratives of the Atlantic alliance.

This contradiction creates a serious problem. When a foreign ambassador can repeatedly condemn states that South Africa treats as diplomatic partners while those states receive no opportunity to respond within the same media ecosystem, the public sphere becomes structurally imbalanced. The episode surrounding the condolence book illustrates the consequences.

One diplomatic mission responded with an appeal to shared humanity through the words of Sa'di. Another mission condemned the mockery of civilian deaths. The Ukrainian ambassador chose to transform a moment of mourning into a geopolitical accusation delivered publicly to a foreign audience.

That decision raises an

unavoidable question. How does a foreign diplomat feel sufficiently empowered to speak with such impunity inside South Africa's public sphere?

The answer lies partly within the permissive media environment that elevates one narrative while marginalising others. It also reflects a deeper uncertainty about South Africa's own geopolitical posture under the Government of National Unity.

South Africa once cultivated a reputation as a mediator capable of speaking across geopolitical divides. That credibility depended on intellectual independence and balanced engagement.

War produces grief across borders. Families mourn their dead regardless of political allegiance. Diplomacy exists to ensure that this reality remains visible even during the fiercest conflicts.

When diplomats abandon restraint and convert death into rhetorical ammunition, the damage extends beyond a single letter. It erodes the fragile norms that allow states in conflict to speak to one another at all.

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# The Conflict-of-Interest Judgment Opens the Door to By-Elections

By: Malefo Thinyane

The recent High Court judgment in the matter brought by Honourable Teboho Mojapela together with the Basotho Covenant Movement and the Popular Front for Democracy may, in time, be remembered as one of the most consequential constitutional decisions in Lesotho's democratic history. Not merely because the court ordered Parliament to enact conflict-of-interest legislation within twelve months, but because the judgment quietly exposes a deeper constitutional reality that the country can no longer ignore.

That reality is simple: Members of Parliament who are doing business with the state may already be constitutionally disqualified from holding office. The court's reasoning cuts through years of political ambiguity. Parliament had attempted to reject the Conflict of Interest Bill through a majority vote. But the judges made it clear that Parliament cannot use voting procedures to defeat a constitutional obligation. The Constitution remains supreme, and no institution of state can simply choose to ignore it. But beyond ordering Parliament to enact legislation, the judgment forces the country to confront a much more immediate question.

If the Constitution already disqualifies individuals with commercial interests in government contracts from serving in Parliament, what should happen to MPs who currently find themselves in that situation?

The answer may lie directly



in Section 59 of the Constitution of Lesotho. Section 59 deals with disqualifications for membership of Parliament. Among the factors listed are situations where a person holds interests in government contracts. The Constitution anticipates legislation to regulate this matter, but the principle itself is clear: individuals whose financial interests intersect with government contracting cannot be expected to exercise independent legislative oversight over the very state from which they profit.

This is not a technical legal question. It is a question about the integrity of the state.

The High Court's judgment explains the logic behind this constitutional safeguard. When individuals with commercial interests in government contracts occupy positions of political authority, the temptation to manipulate public power for private benefit becomes overwhelming. Such situations risk turning the machinery of government into a marketplace for self-enrichment.

The Constitution therefore placed a clear boundary between public office and private financial interests in government contracts. What the High Court has now said, in essence,

is that Parliament cannot pretend that this constitutional safeguard does not exist.

Yet there is a further implication that has not yet been widely discussed. If an MP is constitutionally disqualified under Section 59, the Constitution does not contemplate that they remain comfortably seated in the National Assembly while Parliament debates future legislation. Quite the opposite.

The Speaker of the National Assembly has both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that the constitutional qualifications for membership of Parliament are respected. Where a member becomes disqualified, the normal constitutional consequence is the declaration of a vacancy in that constituency. And when a constituency seat becomes vacant, the democratic remedy is straightforward: a by-election.

This is not a radical proposition. It is the very mechanism through which the Constitution preserves the legitimacy of Parliament. Constituencies cannot remain represented by individuals who no longer meet the constitutional requirements to serve. In other words, the High Court's judgment does more than order Parliament to pass a law.

It forces the country to confront whether some MPs are already sitting in Parliament in violation of the Constitution.

The uncomfortable truth is that the issue of politicians doing business with the state has hovered over Lesotho's politics for years. Contracts, tenders and political power have often moved too close together for comfort. The public has long suspected that the lines between governance and personal business in-

terests have blurred. Now the Constitution itself has returned to the centre of the conversation. The High Court has reminded the country that constitutional obligations are not optional. Parliament cannot vote them away. And if the Constitution sets limits on who may serve as a Member of Parliament, those limits must be respected. Which brings us back to the role of the Speaker. If credible evidence exists that certain MPs hold interests in government contracts, the Speaker should not wait passively for legislation to be enacted within twelve months. The Constitution is already in force today.

The responsible course of action would be to determine whether those MPs remain constitutionally qualified to hold office. If they do not, the Speaker should declare vacancies in those constituencies.

The ultimate decision would then rest where it properly belongs: with the voters.

Let the affected constituencies go back to the polls and elect representatives who meet the constitutional standards for public office. If the voters wish to return the same individuals to Parliament after they have resolved their conflicts of interest, that is their democratic right. But the current situation, where individuals potentially sit in Parliament while simultaneously doing business with the state, is precisely the type of arrangement the Constitution was designed to prevent.

The High Court has opened the constitutional door.

It is now up to the institutions of Parliament to decide whether they will walk through it.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

The Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC) President Letsatsi Ntsibolane on Thursday, March 5, welcomed American philanthropist David Gorman to Lesotho during his visit as a guest of the Federation of Cycling Lesotho. Gorman has become widely known in the Mountain Kingdom for his longstanding commitment to promoting access to bicycles in our country. Over the past decade, the American has facilitated the donation of more than 7,000 bicycles to communities across Lesotho, primarily targeting children and vulnerable groups. His connection with Lesotho dates back to 1989 when he first arrived in the country as a volunteer with the Peace Corps. During that time, he was stationed in Seforong,

Quthing, Lesotho, where he spent three years living and working in local communities.

Two decades after completing his service, Gorman returned to support the country in a different way. In 2012, he established 'Bikes for Lesotho', an initiative dedicated to collecting secondhand bicycles in the United States and distributing them to children across Lesotho, particularly orphans. The project has since grown significantly, with Gorman having shipped a total of 15 containers filled with donated second hand bicycles to the country. As a passionate cyclist himself, Gorman recalls that while living in Lesotho he rarely saw children riding bicycles. That observation planted the seed for what would later

become a life long mission.

Upon returning to the United States, he began mobilizing communities to donate used bicycles which could be refurbished and sent to Lesotho. For Gorman, bicycles represent far more than simple transportation. "The joy of riding a bike should be available to everyone, especially children," he said. "From that joy comes confidence, health, and even mechanical skills. But it all begins with that first feeling of freedom on two wheels." Through his efforts and partnerships with organisations such as Working Bikes, thousands of bicycles have been distributed not only in Lesotho but in several other countries around the world.

While the main focus of

the current bicycle deliveries remains talent identification and empowering schools, Gorman ultimately hopes the initiative can evolve beyond charity. His long term vision is to contribute to sustainable cycling development in Lesotho by helping create an ecosystem that includes local bike shops, cycling clubs, and competitive races capable of sustaining themselves.

During his current visit, Gorman is also participated in the annual Mo-shoeshoe's Walk, which began on Wednesday, March 4. Through his continued dedication, Gorman's work is helping introduce thousands of Basotho children to cycling while laying the groundwork for the sport's future growth in the country.



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