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Journalists urged to report GBV with care for survivors

Media practitioners across Lesotho have been called to place the dignity and safety of survivors at the centre of every gender-based violence story they publish, as new training underscores the media's power to break silence and shift community attitudes.

By LEMOHANG BOTSANE



Journalists and news reporters in Lesotho have been urged to report cases of gender-based violence (GBV) in a way that is ethical, accurate, and respectful to survivors. The call was made on Wednesday during a one-day training workshop for media practitioners. The workshop was organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency to build the skills of journalists when covering GBV stories. Speaking at the event, UNFPA Representative John Kennedy Mosoti said the training was meant to help journalists report on GBV in a survivor-centred way, putting the safety, dignity, and rights of survivors first in every story.

Mosoti explained that many survivors of GBV still suffer in silence. Instead of reporting cases to the police or support

centres, most choose to confide only in close friends, family members, or neighbours. He said the media can play a pivotal role in breaking this silence. By reporting responsibly, journalists can raise public awareness about GBV, encourage more survivors to seek help, and help reduce the stigma that stops people from speaking out. "Through clear and responsible reporting, the media can educate people, change harmful attitudes, and promote better behaviour towards GBV issues." 'Mapuleng Secheche, the Acting Director General at the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, also addressed the participants. She acknowledged that the fight against GBV in Lesotho faces challenges, including a lack of sufficient funding. However, she stressed that the media remains a powerful tool for sharing information with the public.

According to Secheche, journalists have the ability to influence communities in a positive way. Through clear and responsible reporting, the media can educate people, change harmful attitudes, and promote better behaviour towards GBV issues. Senior Inspector Mojabeng Mokotjomela from the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) gave an update on the situation in the country. She said Maseru district continues to record the highest number of reported GBV cases. Meanwhile, Mokhotlong and Mafeteng districts have the highest number of murder cases linked to GBV.

She said the most common types of GBV reported to the police are sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse.

Inspector Mokotjomela urged journalists to be careful when reporting on these cases. She asked them to protect the identities of survivors and avoid publishing names, photographs, or other details that could put survivors at risk or make their situation worse. One of the journalists at the workshop, Majara Molupe, appealed to government and other partners to give journalists better access to information. He said having accurate and up-to-date data would help reporters produce stronger stories and give the public a clearer picture of how serious the GBV problem is in Lesotho.

Recent statistics show that about 87 per cent of women and girls in Lesotho have experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime. At the end of the workshop, participants agreed that tackling GBV requires teamwork. The media, government departments, and development partners must work together to fight GBV and support survivors across the country.

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Auditor General raises alarm over government financial management

Auditor General Mathabo Makenete has laid bare a catalogue of failures in how public funds are recorded and spent, warning that an unexplained M3 billion (approx. USD 181.8 million) cash discrepancy and M2.81 billion (approx. USD 170.3 million) in unpaid suppliers are undermining service delivery and eroding public trust.

By **LEMOHANG BOTSANE**



The Auditor General of Lesotho, Mathabo Makenete, has raised serious concerns about ongoing problems in how government money is managed and recorded, warning that these weaknesses are making it hard for the government to deliver services to the people properly. Makenete spoke on Thursday in Maseru during a press conference at which she presented her official reports on the government's financial statements for the years ending 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024.

One of the main issues she pointed out is a mismatch in the government's cash records. According to the reports, the statements showing money coming in and money going out do not match. There is a difference of about M3 billion (approx. USD 181.8 million) that cannot be explained. She also found that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) did not use M80 million (approx. USD 4.85 million) from its budget. Instead of returning the unused money to

the main government account, the funds were left unaccounted for.

The Auditor General said there are also problems with how government loans and guarantees are recorded. Some loan guarantees given by state agencies are not properly entered into the books. She stressed that keeping proper records is important so the government knows what it owes. Another problem is that the government does not have a clear record of all its assets. Many buildings, vehicles, and equipment are not listed in the official asset register. This means it is difficult to know what the government actually owns.

“Many businesses are still waiting to be paid for work they have already done. The total amount owed to these businesses stands at M2.81 billion.”

Makenete also flagged issues with the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMIS). This system is supposed to record all government transactions and prepare financial statements. However, some

transactions are missing from the system, which affects the accuracy of the reports.

The reports further show that the government continues to struggle with paying companies that provide services. Many businesses are still waiting to be paid for work they have already done. The total amount owed to these businesses stands at M2.81 billion (approx. USD 170.3 million). This delay is hurting small and medium businesses that depend on government payments to stay afloat. The Auditor General also noted that the government employs more temporary staff than permanent staff in some departments. This creates problems because temporary workers are harder to supervise and hold accountable.

On health, she mentioned that the Lesotho Correctional Service built a health centre for inmates, but the facility is still not being used. Makenete urged Chief Accounting Officers in all government ministries to fix these problems. She said they should put stronger systems in place, improve internal controls, and make sure records are kept properly. She said fixing these issues will help restore public trust and make sure government money is used for the benefit of all Basotho.

KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE

ISSUE	AMOUNT (LSL)	APPROX. (USD)
Unexplained cash discrepancy	M3 billion	~USD 181.8 m
IEC unaccounted budget surplus	M80 million	~USD 4.85 m
Unpaid government suppliers	M2.81 billion	~USD 170.3 m

Exchange rate: approx. M16.50 per USD (mid-market, May 2026)

Defence lawyer defends army's 2014 night raids as state witness calls tactics cowardice

A defence lawyer in Lesotho's long-running treason trial has defended army tactics used during the 2014 raids on police stations, while the state witness called the operation an act of cowardice.

By THOLOANA LESENYA



One of the defence lawyers in the ongoing treason trial linked to the 2014 security operations has defended the strategy used by members of the army during raids on police stations, saying the operation was carefully planned to avoid bloodshed.

Advocate Lepeli Molapo made the remarks this week during cross-examination of Sergeant Shaabe Thamae, the eighth state witness in the high-profile case before the High Court. Sergeant Thamae was among police officers stationed at the Police Headquarters on

the night when Sub-Inspector Mokheseng Ramahloko was allegedly shot and killed during the military operation carried out on 29 and 30 August 2014.

During proceedings, Adv. Molapo

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Official Statements, government communications, and institutional announcements



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argued that the military strategy used during the raids was a sound one because it relied on surprise attacks at night, when police stations were less active and members of the public were absent. According to the lawyer, the aim of the operation was to reduce resistance, avoid injuries and prevent unnecessary deaths.

He told the court that police stations where firearms were kept were targeted at night because fewer officers were on duty during those hours and ordinary citizens would not be caught in dangerous situations. "The operation went smoothly at the targeted police stations."

ADV. LEPELI MOLAPO,
DEFENCE COUNSEL

Adv. Molapo further argued that the success of the strategy was However, Sergeant Thamae strongly rejected the lawyer's characterisation, describing the military approach as cowardice. The witness said the army should have known through its intelligence structures that firearms at police stations were stored in secure safes controlled by senior officers who were not even on night duty.

He argued there was no need for the operation to be conducted in secret, under cover of darkness. According to Sergeant Thamae, if the army had genuinely believed there was a security threat involving the police, proper legal and professional procedures should have been followed rather than launching armed raids.

He also rejected allegations that police officers intended to distribute firearms unlawfully to members of the public, explaining that the duty of the police is to confiscate illegal weapons from civilians, not to hand them out. "If a police officer gives guns to members of the public, that officer would be breaking the law and action should be taken against them," Sergeant Thamae told the court.

Earlier in the cross-examination, Adv. Molapo revealed that army intelligence had allegedly received information suggesting that some police officers intended to arm certain civilians in order to create instability in the country. The alleged plan was believed to be aimed at threatening coalition partners who were part of the government at the time. Adv. Molapo said senior army commanders then issued instructions to prevent what they believed could become an insurgency, and that the or-

der was lawful because one of the core duties of the army is to protect the government, the country and the nation from threats. The court heard that the operation formed part of wider tensions between the army and police during the political instability that affected Lesotho in 2014.

NAME	POSITION
Mothetjoa Metsing	LCD leader; former Dep. PM
Selibe Mochoboroane	MEC leader; Minister of Agriculture
Tlali Kamoli	Former army commander
Litekanyo Nyakane	Army member
Motlohelo Ntsane	Army member
Leutsoa Motsieloa	Army member
COURT DETAILS	
Judge	Justice 'Maliepollo Makhetha
Venue	High Court, Maseru
Prosecution	Advocates Rafoneke and Setlojoane
Defence	Advocates Teele KC, Molati, Molapo, Letuka and Mafaesa

All accused have pleaded not guilty to charges including treason, murder, attempted murder and aggravated assault. The trial continues.



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High Court dismisses discharge bid in 2014 bombings case, orders accused to open defence

The High Court has dismissed a discharge application by five army members accused in the 2014 bombings case, ruling that the accused must now open their defence.

By THOLOANA LESENYA



The High Court this week dismissed an application for discharge filed by five army members accused in connection with the 2014 bombings case. The ruling was delivered by Justice Charles Hungwe, who said the prosecution had present-

ed enough evidence for the matter to continue. The court found that the accused persons still have a case to answer and must now present their defence.

Among the accused is former army

commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli. The others are Pitso Ramoepane, Litekanyo Nyakane, Mohlalefi Seitlheko and Heqoa Malefane. The five had approached the court seeking discharge under Section

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175(3) of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act. Their lawyers argued that the prosecution had failed to provide evidence linking them to the offences before court, and that after the state closed its case, there was no sufficient basis for the accused to be placed on their defence.

“The Crown has adduced enough evidence upon which a reasonable court might convict.”

JUSTICE CHARLES HUNGWE,
HIGH COURT

Justice Hungwe dismissed those arguments, explaining that at this stage of the proceedings the court was only required to determine whether there was evidence upon which a reasonable court could possibly convict, not to evaluate the full weight of the state’s case.

He further explained that a discharge application can only succeed where there is no evidence at all against the accused, or where the evidence is so weak, unreliable or discredited that no reasonable court would rely on it. He added that simply denying the allegations is not sufficient to justify a discharge.

The case relates to bomb attacks that allegedly took place in 2014 at the homes of senior figures, including former First Lady Liabiloe Ramoholi, now known as ‘Maesaiah Thabane, and former Police Commissioner Dr. Khothatso Tšooana. The charges include attempted murder, risk of injury, aggravated assault and malicious damage to property, in connection with incidents at properties in Moshoeshoe II.

The prosecution had strongly opposed the discharge application, arguing that witnesses who testified during the trial had already provided evidence linking the accused to the offences. State lawyers maintained that the court should not evaluate the entire strength of the case at this stage, but only determine whether there was evidence connecting the accused to the alleged crimes.

After considering arguments from both sides, the court agreed with the prosecution and ruled that the trial should continue. The matter has attracted sustained public attention because of its connection to the political and security instability that affected Lesotho in 2014. The bombings and related incidents resulted in a series of criminal cases

involving members of the military and police. The ruling clears the way for the accused to present their side of the story before court. Throughout the proceedings, all five have maintained their innocence.

THE ACCUSED

NAME	POSITION
Lt. Gen. Tlali Kamoli	Former army commander
Pitso Ramoepane	Army member
Litekanyo Nyakane	Army member
Mohlalefi Seitlheko	Army member
Heqoa Malefane	Army member
COURT DETAILS	
Judge	Justice Charles Hungwe
Venue	High Court, Maseru
Prosecution	Advocates Setlojoane and Rafoneke
Defence	Advocates Mohau KC, Molati, Letuka, Mafaisa and Thoahlane
Charges	Attempted murder, risk of injury, aggravated assault, malicious damage to property

The defence case is expected to begin before the High Court following the dismissal of the discharge application.



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Sustainability, accountability, and development impact across Lesotho and the region



Ministry urges teachers to champion Prince Mohato Award Scheme

The Ministry of Education has appealed to high school teachers across Lesotho's central region to enrol in the Prince Mohato Award Scheme and to recruit learners into the programme.

BY STAFF REPORTER



Ministry of Education Chief Inspector Central, Dr Khoarane Khoarane, made the appeal during a teachers workshop for high school educators in the central region, where he outlined the purpose and structure of the Prince Mohato Award Scheme (PMAS), a non-profit organisation patronised by His Majesty King Letsie III.

Dr Khoarane described PMAS as a char-

itable, non-competitive programme of volunteer leisure-time activities designed for young people between the ages of 14 and 24, in which participants design their own programme activities, set their own goals and record their own progress. "A personal challenge aimed at personal development and acquisition of leadership skills and social responsibility"

He said this scheme is a personal chal-

lenge aimed at personal development and the acquisition of leadership skills and social responsibility, run through organisations and institutions such as schools, colleges, youth clubs, voluntary organisations and local groups.

Dr Khoarane added that the programme helps instil discipline and resilience against life's challenges, including the threat of drug abuse, and equips learners with practical skills suited to their different levels of study. He said the programme works to capacitate and equip Lesotho's youth in personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, responsibility to themselves and service to their communities.

PMAS has three levels of awards, each comprising four sections: service, skills, physical recreation and adventurous journeys. Dr Khoarane said each section challenges participants in their own beliefs about what they can achieve.

He emphasised that the scheme is open to all, regardless of gender, culture, religious affiliation, political affiliation, or mental and physical ability. The scheme was founded by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1956 and now operates in more than 40 countries. It was introduced in Lesotho in 1970, and was named the Prince Mohato Award Scheme, when His Majesty was still a prince, by the late Queen 'Mamohato Bereng Seeiso. Awards are presented by His Majesty, giving young participants the opportunity to be in his presence.

Business & Economy

10 ^{IT}

Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy

Auditor-General issues adverse opinion on government accounts as M80m IEC transfer routed through STANLIB raises alarm

A damning audit of the 2023/24 consolidated financial statements finds a M3.09 billion cash discrepancy, M96 million in unregistered assets, and an unexplained year-end movement of public funds by the Independent Electoral Commission.

By STAFF REPORTER



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Business & Economy



Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy

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The movement was not disclosed to the Accountant-General. Because the IEC account showed a

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE ADVERSE FINDINGS SUMMARY

CASH DISCREPANCY	M3.09bn gap between statement (M5.91bn) and Note 15(M2.82bn)
IEC / STANLIB	M80m moved to STANLIB inflow account; Consolidated Fund understated
CBL PAYMENTS	M13.1m processed by Central Bank; not in government cashbook
UNREGISTERED ASSETS	M96.03m acquired; only M2.07m in asset registers
UNBUDGETED SPENDING	M315.98m across three spending units
UNREGULARISED ADVANCES	M404.78m; Supplementary Bill not approved by Parliament
CONTINGENCY FUND	M152.43m drawn for non-urgent expenditure; breaches Constitution s.113
PAYMENT ARREARS	M2.81bn in obligations not met within due dates
REVENUE VARIANCE	M422m gap between reported receipts and IFMIS ledger

OTHER MAJOR FINDINGS

A M3.09 billion discrepancy in cash balances is among the other adverse findings.

The Consolidated Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments reported a government cash balance of M5.91 billion, while Note 15 of the same statements showed M2.82 billion. A separate inconsistency affects reported cash movements: the statement showed a M1.31 billion increase over the year, against M600 million in Note 15, a further M710 million unexplained.

On public assets, four spending units purchased assets totalling M96.03 million, of which only M2.07 million were recorded in asset registers. The CFS and Ministry Financial Statements reported total receipts of M21.83 billion against an IFMIS ledger total of M21.41 billion, an unexplained variance of M422million.


M315.98 million was spent without a budget across three spending units. M404.78 million in advances remained unregularised because the Supplementary Appropriation Bill for 2023/24 had not been approved by Parliament at the time of the report. An advance of M152.43 million was drawn from the Contingency Fund for expenditure described as neither urgent nor unforeseen, in breach of Section 113 of the Consti-

tution.

nil balance at year-end while the Consolidated Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments recorded M80 million, the Consolidated Fund was understated by that amount as at 31 March 2024.

The funds were returned to the IEC account on 2 April 2024, but by then the financial year had closed. The Auditor-General found the transfer in breach of Section 14(3) of the PFMA Act, 2011, and Treasury Regulations 31(a) and (b), which require unspent appropriations to lapse at year-end.

The government failed to meet M2.81 billion in payment obligations to individuals, suppliers, lenders and contractors within specified due dates. Treasury Bills showed an unexplained fall from M867.54 million to M747.90 million with no record of redemptions or new issues. Loan guarantee balances were reported as M54.91 million in the CFS, nil in the Public Debt Financial Statements, and M64.91 million in the Ministry of Finance statements. The IEC is directed to comply with the PFMA Act and Treasury Regulations in the utilisation of public funds.




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Business & Economy

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Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy

Over M1.1 million, blank scorecards, and the same items contracted twice: the final account of LNDC's Hlotse expenditure

Part Three · A third contractor, a procurement that left no paper trail, and M1,108,113 spent on a building still unfit for use A third contractor is paid M286,825 for paving and blinds already contracted six months earlier. The 2022 evaluation scorecards are entirely blank. No bidder names, no scores, no evaluator signature. By the time the task team visits in February 2022, cumulative expenditure has crossed M1.1 million. The building still cannot host a meeting.

By STAFF REPORTER



This is the third and final part of a three-part investigation into maintenance expenditure at the LNDC Hlotse Residential Outestate. Part One examined how M545,238 was paid to SPT Construction while nine major items were later found undelivered. Part Two examined how LNDC paid M159,840 less than its own purchase order authorised to Clever Choice, with no itemised explanation.

Maseru

By September 2021, the Lesotho National Development Corporation was contracting work at the Hlotse Residential Outestate for the third time in 18 months. The new contractor was T Rabotsi Construction. The purchase

order, numbered 2764 and dated 13 September 2021, covered paving bricks, mountable kerbs, and window blinds. The total came to M286,825.

The Lesotho Tribune has established that this contract creates a significant overlap with work already paid for three months earlier.

Under the Clever Choice contract settled in June 2021, LNDC paid for 672 square metres of paving bricks and 43 window blinds at the same property. The T Rabotsi contract covered 800 units of paving bricks and, again, 43 window blinds at the same address. The same two categories of work, at the same property, contracted and paid for twice within a six-month window.

SCOPE OVERLAP · SAME PROP-

ERTY, SAME ITEMS, SIX MONTHS APART CLEVER CHOICE (PTY) LTD

PO 2674 · PAID JUNE 2021 Paving bricks, 672m2 M147,840 Window blinds, 43 units M12,000

T RABOTSI CONSTRUCTION PO 2764 · PAID DEC 2021 Paving bricks, 800 units M260,000 Window blinds, 43 units M11,825

vs

Paving bricks and window blinds contracted and paid for twice at the same property within six months. No explanation appears in the documents. No explanation for this overlap appears anywhere in the documents reviewed by this newspaper. LNDC has not responded to questions about it. "Supply and laying of paving as prescribed and fitting blinds to offices." General description, T Rabotsi Construction PO 2764, September 2021 The Certificate of Practical Completion for the T Rabotsi contract was signed by the maintenance clerk Ntlamelle and the contractor on 1 December 2021, with the leasing officer adding her signature on 9 December 2021. The invoice, Invoice No. 17, is also dated 1 December 2021. As was the case with the Clever Choice contract examined in Part Two, the completion certificate and the invoice carry the same date.

The payment processing approval for T

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Business & Economy

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Markets, Monetary policy & the structural forces shaping Lesotho's economy

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Rabotsi was authorised by the PMO, PM, and GM-PDM in mid-December 2021. The amount approved, M286,825, matches the purchase order total without reduction. The audit slip records a disbursement of approximately M272,483 after withholding tax. Unlike the Clever Choice file, this payment went through without visible complication.

With the T Rabotsi payment, cumulative expenditure on the Hlotse Residential Outestate crossed M1.1 million. The property had now absorbed funds across four separate payment cycles spanning July 2020 to December 2021. Two months after the final payment, in February 2022, the LNDC task team arrived and found the building could not host a meeting.

FULL EXPENDITURE RECORD · HLOTSE RESIDENTIAL OUTESTATE ·

2020–2021 July 2020 SPT Construction — Inv. 53, PO 2543 — 38-item renovation M545,238

Sept 2020 SPT Construction — Inv. 54, PO 2576 — Roof paint (post-certificate) M33,200

June 2021 Clever Choice — Inv. 013, PO 2674 — Paving, fencing, guardhouse, blinds M242,850

Dec 2021 T Rabotsi Construction — Inv. 17, PO 2764 — Paving, kerbs, blinds (overlap)

M286,825

TOTAL Four contracts.
Four completion certificates.
18 months. M1,108,113

Two months after the final payment, the February 2022 task team found the building could not host a meeting. “The office was below standard. The team could not have a meeting in it and had to find an alternative meeting place.” LNDC Hlotse Regional Office Site Visit Report, 7 February

2022 It was against this backdrop that LNDC, in February 2022, conducted a fresh procurement exercise to identify interior designers and landscapers for yet another round of work at the property. Four interior design firms and four landscaping firms were solicited and invited to present. The Lesotho Tribune has reviewed the evaluation scorecards prepared for this exercise.

Both scorecards are blank templates. Neither contains the name of a single bidder. Neither contains a single allocated score. The evaluator field on both documents is empty. The scorecards are, in their current form, indistinguishable from the blank templates that would have been distributed before the evaluation began. A valid procurement evaluation requires scores to be recorded against specific bidders, enabling a defensible recommendation. Without filled-in scorecards, there is no documentary basis for any recommendation that emerged from this process. The documents reviewed by the Tribune include no alternative scoring record, no evaluation panel minutes, and no signed recommendation memorandum.

EVALUATION SCORECARDS · FEBRUARY 2022 · INTERIOR DESIGN AND LANDSCAPING

Interior Design & Branding
Bidder names recorded BLANK
Evaluator identified BLANK
Compliance scores BLANK
Technical scores BLANK
Financial scores BLANK

Landscaping
Bidder names recorded BLANK
Evaluator identified BLANK
Compliance scores BLANK
Technical scores BLANK
Financial scores BLANK

A valid procurement evaluation requires scores recorded against specific bidders enabling a defensible recommendation. Without filled-in scorecards, there is no documentary basis for any recommendation that emerged from this process. No alternative scoring record, no eval-

uation panel minutes, and no signed recommendation memorandum were found. The submission and presentation process also produced an unexplained inconsistency. The deadline for submissions was 18 February 2022 at 12:00. Progressive Design Studio submitted at 12:30, thirty minutes late, and was permitted to present between 12:30 and 14:00. Equinox Designs also submitted after the deadline and was excluded. The distinction between the two late submitters is not explained in the documents.

Of the four landscaping firms invited, none appeared to present. The final report records that none of the three landscaping service providers who submitted came to present. The report lists three submitters rather than the four originally invited, suggesting one firm did not submit at all.

The overall picture that emerges from the three-part documentary record is of a procurement process in which the same property absorbed four rounds of expenditure totalling more than M1.1 million over 18 months, with incomplete delivery, unexplained payment reductions, overlapping scopes of work, completion certificates signed on the same day as invoices, and a 2022 evaluation exercise that produced no filled-in scorecards.

Each of the individual anomalies identified in this investigation might, in isolation, attract a procedural explanation. Taken together, across four contractors and nearly two years, they describe a pattern of expenditure at a single LNDC property that has never been publicly accounted for. LNDC has not responded to any of the questions submitted by the Lesotho Tribune in the course of this investigation. Those questions remain open.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Lesotho Tribune submitted written questions to LNDC regarding all findings in this three-part investigation. No response had been received at the time of publication. The Tribune will publish any response in full.

Farmers Corner

14 **IT**

Small holder farming, land, climate risk, and Lesotho's climate risk

Mokhotlong records 71 confirmed FMD cases as national disaster declared

Mokhotlong district records 71 confirmed and 503 reported cases of Foot and Mouth Disease, prompting a public roadshow and calls for a coordinated national response.

BY LENA



Mokhotlong has 71 confirmed cases of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and 503 reported cases since the outbreak of the disease in the district. The District Agricultural Extension Officer (DEO), Mr Thapelo Mothae, said this when updating members of the District Disaster Management Team (DDMT) on FMD-related issues at a one-day meeting held on Wednesday.

He said cattle are mostly affected, adding that the higher numbers are concentrated in the Mapholaneng Resource Centre area. Mr Mothae stated that in an effort to curb the disease from spreading further, the Department of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition will lead a roadshow on FMD in Mapholaneng on Friday.

He said the aim is to educate livestock farmers and the general public about the disease and its symptoms, to enable timely reporting and enhance protection when suspicious symptoms are noticed on livestock.

The DEO mentioned that besides Mapholaneng, confirmed cases have been recorded in Mots eremeli, Lehlohla, Thabang and Tlhanyaku. Since FMD has been declared a national disaster, there is need for joint efforts to address it with the affected Ministry taking the lead.

Meanwhile, the District Disaster Manager, Mr Phano Ntene, said since FMD has been declared a national disaster, there is need for joint efforts to address it, with the affected Ministry taking the lead. Mr Ntene urged all members of the team to be supportive and ensure that the response plan, when in place, is successfully implemented in the district.

FMD is described as a highly contagious viral, air-borne disease of livestock with significant economic impact. It affects cattle, pigs, sheep and goats. Cattle are among the most susceptible animals. The disease is characterised by fever and blister-like sores on the tongue and lips, in the mouth, on the teats and between the hooves. The disease causes severe production losses. While the majority of affected animals recover,

Editorial

The Tribune's position, and voices that challenge, provoke and inform



An order is not a shield: the Tang verdict and the end of military impunity

The High Court has convicted LDF soldiers of murder in the death of Lisebo Tang. The verdict demolishes the defence of superior orders and sends a message that no uniform, rank, or institutional structure places any individual beyond the reach of the criminal law.

By Editorial



In the night of 10 May 2014, Lisebo Tang, a 20-year-old Mosebo woman, was shot dead as she and her boyfriend, Tsepo Jane, drove past the Ha Lekele, Maseru, residence of then-LDF commander Tlali Kamoli. Jane was gravely wounded. The vehicle they were travelling in was struck by 123 bullets. Seven empty cartridge cases were recovered at a crime scene that investigators said showed signs of tampering. The rifles the army submitted for ballistic analysis did not match those casings.

Kamoli attended Tang's funeral and offered an apology, describing the soldiers' conduct as a reaction to the car's "suspicious movements" carried out without ill intention. That apology was an admission that something had gone catastrophically wrong. What it was not was accountability. A docket, CIR 121/04/14, was opened.

No charges followed for years. In 2019, five years after Tang's death, the army paid her family M10,000.00 (approximately \$606 at current rates) described as covering funeral and coffin expenses. The family was asked to sign an agreement not to sue the military.

Justice, it seemed, had been quietly purchased and filed away. It was not.

VERDICT SUMMARY · HIGH COURT OF LESOTHO
COUNT CHARGE FINDING
Count 1 Murder of Lisebo Tang
GUILTY

THE FLAWED DEFENCE
"The defence of superior orders is among the oldest and most discredited arguments in military law. It was buried at Nuremberg in 1946 and has not been resurrected with any success since."

The defence of superior orders is among the oldest and most discredited arguments in military law. It was buried at Nuremberg in 1946 and has not been resurrected with any success since. The principle established then, and codified in every serious jurisdiction that followed, is elementary: a soldier who commits an unlawful act does not escape criminal liability simply because he was told to commit it. The order does not transfer the crime. It implicates both the giver and the receiver.

Lesotho's military culture has not always operated as though it understood this. The pattern, well documented across successive crises in the LDF's recent history, has been one in which commanders issue instructions and subordinates execute them, with the implicit understanding that the institution will absorb any fallout. Soldiers have historically sheltered behind rank, behind institutional loyalty, and behind the blunt assertion that they were following orders. The Kamoli era, in particular, produced a generation of conduct in which that shelter appeared solid.

The Tang verdict has made it demonstrably porous. THE SETTLEMENT THAT CHANGED NOTHING
The payment of M10,000.00 (approximately \$606) to the Tang family in 2019, secured by an agreement not to pursue the military in civil proceedings, deserves to be read carefully in the light of the criminal verdict. That payment was not compensation. It was, in effect, an attempt to use the family's grief and

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Editorial

The Tribune's position, and voices that challenge, provoke and inform



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limited means to foreclose accountability. "A private agreement between a bereaved family and a state institution cannot extinguish criminal liability. The two processes run on separate tracks."

The courts have shown that such attempts do not bind criminal justice. A private agreement between a bereaved family and a state institution cannot extinguish criminal liability. The two processes run on separate tracks. The civil settlement was always irrelevant to the criminal question of guilt. **WHAT THIS VERDICT MEANS** The broader significance of this verdict extends beyond the Tang case. Lesotho has passed through a period of serious institutional impunity, in which soldiers, officers, and officials who committed grave acts were shielded by rank, by delay, and by the institutional tendency to close ranks. Courts have been slow. Dockets have languished.

Families have buried their dead and received nominal payments. The Tang conviction is evidence that courts can and will pierce the institutional veil when the facts require

Count 2 Attempted murder of Tsepo Jane **GUILTY**
 Count 3 Malicious damage to property **GUILTY**
ALL ACCUSED – GUILTY ON ALL THREE COUNTS The High Court

has convicted the soldiers involved on all three counts. Every accused was found guilty on every count. The verdict is not merely the conclusion of a criminal trial. It is a judicial statement about the limits of institutional protection and the irreducible personal liability of every individual who pulls a trigger.

LAWFUL ORDERS AND THEIR LIMITS

The court's findings require an understanding of a distinction the defence of superior orders consistently collapses: the difference between an order that is lawful and one that is not. A soldier is obliged to obey lawful orders. That obligation is the foundation of military discipline and the chain of command. But the obligation does not extend to unlawful orders.

Firing 123 rounds into a civilian vehicle travelling on a public road, killing a passenger and critically wounding another, is not the execution of a lawful order. It is a crime. The soldiers who carried it out knew, or ought to have known, that it was a crime. Their conviction reflects that.

The doctrine of command responsibility, which operates alongside the individual liability of subordinates, holds that a commander may also bear criminal liability for the acts of those under his command where he knew or should have known of the acts and failed to prevent or punish them.

That doctrine has its own still-unresolved dimensions in this saga. But for present purposes, the more immediate lesson is directed at those further down the chain: the person who fires the weapon is answerable for the firing. The institutional umbrella does not reach that far. It is evidence that time alone does not extinguish justice: a crime committed in 2014 can produce a guilty verdict more than a decade later.

For anyone in Lesotho who believes that uniform, rank, or institutional affiliation provides insulation from the criminal law, this verdict is a correction. Individual soldiers bear individual liability. Individual officers bear command responsibility. The institution cannot substitute for the person, and the order cannot substitute for the act.

Lisebo Tang was 20 years old. She was a passenger in a car on a public road. She was shot 123 times by armed men guarding a general's house. That it took more than a decade to reach a verdict is itself an indictment of the systems that were supposed to prevent such killing and punish it swiftly. That it has now reached one is, at minimum, a signal that those systems remain capable of functioning.

The signal should be heard clearly by every person in Lesotho who has ever believed, or been encouraged to believe, that an order is a shield.



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At Just 20, Mofolo Produces World-Class Marathon Performance in Cape Town

BY LITS'ITSO LETSUNYANE



Kamohelo Mofolo (far right)

One of Lesotho's top marathon runners, Kamohelo Mofolo, has delivered yet another remarkable performance at the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon on May 24, cementing his status as one of the country's brightest long-distance talents.

The 20-year-old crossed the finish line in an impressive time of 2:08:50, finishing 11th overall in a highly competitive field. Despite narrowly missing out on a top-ten finish, Mofolo has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first Southern African athlete to cross the finish line.

According to his coach, James McKirdy, who also coaches Lesotho marathon national record holder Tebello Ramakongoana, Mofolo's performance now places him second on Lesotho's all-time marathon rankings, behind only Ramakongoana.

The race itself produced history as Ethiopia's legendary Mohamed Esa Lesotho Tribune. lesothotribune.co.ls . Information Liberates

shattered the course record with a crazy time of 2:04:55. The mark is notably the fastest marathon time ever recorded on African soil.

For Mofolo, the result is another major achievement in what has already been a breakthrough year. The young athlete currently holds Lesotho's national 10KM record after clocking 27:47 earlier this year at the ABSA Durban 10KM.

His impressive season also includes victory at the Hollywood Bets 10km race in Durban, where he set a new course record. In that race, Mofolo finished in under 28 minutes, marking his third consecutive sub 28-minute performance and further highlighting his exceptional consistency over the distance.

Mofolo's Cape Town performance becomes even more impressive considering the calibre of athletes he managed to outperform. At just 20 years old, he

finished ahead of several established marathon stars, although he was unable to get the better of all of them.

Another strong performance for Lesotho came from Tukiso Motlomelo, who finished 19th in a respectable time of 2:16:30. The legendary Kenyan marathoner Eliud Kipchoge crossed the finish line in 16th position with a time of 2:13:29.

Both Mofolo and Motlomelo are coached by McKirdy, who believes Mofolo has firmly established himself as Lesotho's second-fastest marathon runner behind Tebello Ramakongoana.

With a national 10km record already to his name and now a marathon time of 2:08:50, Mofolo continues to demonstrate why he is regarded as one of the most exciting long-distance prospects in the country. At only 20 years of age, his latest performance suggests that even greater achievements could lie ahead for the rising star runner.