



Lesotho Council of NGO's statement on the new political and security developments in Lesotho – 21/06/07

Preamble

On the 20th June 2007, the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) Democracy and Human Rights Commission held discussions on the current security developments in Lesotho. The meeting followed the previous day's consultation between civil society formations, the private sector and the Commissioner of Police, which influenced adjustments on original hours of the curfew.

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission acknowledges that:

- The enforcement of the curfew in Maseru has been necessitated by immediate response to security threat as explained by the Commissioner of Police during the consultation meeting on 19th June 2007;

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission believes that:

- In order to advance democracy and development, public participation and dialogue are critical elements to be ensured;
- Different stakeholders in the country have serious concerns regarding the conduct of some security personnel on duty during the curfew, who allegedly violate human rights, especially right to freedom of movement, freedom from arbitrary arrest and torture as guaranteed by Chapter 2, Section 1, Subsection (c) and (d) of the Constitution of Lesotho.

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission notes that:

- Socio-economic development is fundamental in achieving peace, stability, democracy and human rights;
- Security, peace and political stability are critical in advancing democracy and development;
- Security should not only be seen as a major concern for political stability, but also an important ingredient in socio-economic development and rule of law.

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission is concerned that:

- In most cases, the security personnel on patrol during the curfew do not have positive identity, thus taking advantage to abuse and harass members of the public;
- The curfew has caused a lot of alarm among the Maseru residents;
- The prevailing harassment and violation of human rights will ruin credibility of Lesotho's human rights record in the region and internationally.

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission regrets:

- The inability of state's security establishments to apprehend the perpetrators of criminal activities and lack of respect for human rights;
- The failure of government to issue any communication on the issue of the curfew;
- That the failure by government to own the curfew casts doubt on the fact that the Police and the Military are under civilian control as provided by the Constitution of Lesotho;

The Democracy and Human Rights Commission calls on:

- The Government of Lesotho not to let the existing security threats undermine the rule of law and socio-economic development in the country;
- The courts of law to take necessary measures to bring to book all those who are responsible for violation;
- The police to make sure that the investigations and search for missing weapons in the country do not undermine the rule of law;

- The Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to denounce the heinous acts of torture and violation of the human rights allegedly committed by army personnel on individual citizens and take necessary measures to redress the situation;
- Government of Lesotho and Commander of LDF to ensure that unnecessary divisions within the armed forces are avoided at all costs before they threaten state security;
- Basotho nation to nurture their democracy, where every Mosotho shall enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights as stated in the Constitution

In conclusion, the Democracy and Human Rights Commission at LCN commends the Government of Lesotho for having signed and ratified several international declarations and instruments. This affirms the people of Lesotho's commitment to promote culture of human rights, democracy, democratic governance, rule of law, sustainable development and sustainable economic justice and development. The Commission strongly calls for respect of these instruments.