



08 September 2017

TRC Statement on the Assassination of the LDF Commander

The Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) condemns in no uncertain terms the assassination of army commanders within a period of two years. This unfortunate incident has not only shocked the global community but has further devastated the nation. TRC strongly holds that the right to life is the pivot of all other rights. It is non-derogable, and it applies to all persons, including the military personnel, at all times.

TRC has noted with concern an incident which took place at Ratjomose Barracks on the 05 September 2017 where Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) Army Commander was shot dead allegedly by the senior officers of LDF who were also killed in the shoot-out.

Lesotho as a state party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international human rights instruments, is obliged to prevent arbitrary deprivations of life caused by its own agents, and to protect individuals and groups from such deprivations at the hands of others.

Lesotho further has an obligation under the African Charter to investigate any killings that take place, and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

Government through its intelligence institutions, has an obligation to ensure and to guarantee all citizens' right to life. This obligation is not only to protect, but to demonstrate vigilance and to proactively undertake necessary preventive measures. The fact that national intelligence as well as military intelligence did not foresee this unfortunate eventuality of commander assassination leaves much to be desired. This brings into question the safety of the acting – commander, furthermore it brings into question the security and the safety of the prime minister as he is effectively the minister of defence.

We therefore, advise the government of Lesotho to seek SADC military oversight committee to supervise proper security arrangements and transition management at LDF Command level. The SADC military oversight committee together with government must facilitate immediate security changes that seem to be imperative after the untimely death of Lt. Gen Motšomotšo.

The government must further move swiftly to address security concerns by effecting, as a matter of urgency, reforms in the LDF. The government must ensure that the reform processes must be clean in that they should not be facilitated by any official of the LDF directly or indirectly mentioned as being involved in the operations that led to the killing of Lt. Gen. Maaparankoe Mahao.

TRC calls upon the government of Lesotho to continue implementing recommendations from the SADC Commission of Inquiry predominantly where it recommends that "all LDF officers implicated in the cases of murder, attempted murder and treason be suspended **IMMEDIATELY** (emphasis added) while investigations in their cases proceed in line with international best practice".

TRC is generally concerned with security and safety in the country. Unlawful killings must be addressed accordingly irrespective of which person is killed. Therefore the government must intensively investigate the recent killings and punish perpetrators. TRC once again calls upon SADC to provide more concrete and effective measures to expedite security reforms.