



LAW SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA
PRESS RELEASE

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Law Society urges Lesotho authorities to drop charges against lawyer

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) repeats its call – made in November last year – to the Lesotho authorities to cease their harassment and intimidation of lawyers, particularly those lawyers involved in the defence of 23 soldiers accused of alleged mutiny last year.

‘We join regional and international organisations expressing their outrage at the arrest earlier this month of prominent Lesotho lawyer Khotso Nthonto and the attack on his family home and vehicle,’ say LSSA Co-Chairpersons, Busani Mabunda and Richard Scott.

They add: ‘We understand that the charges on which Mr Nthonto was arrested relate to his defence of the soldiers. It is unacceptable for lawyers to be expected to represent their clients professionally if they are under constant fear for their personal and professional safety and that of their families.’

The LSSA joins other organisations in calling on the Lesotho authorities to withdraw the charges against Mr Nthonto; to ensure the safety of all lawyers and judges involved in the above matter and to show respect for the rule of law as well as for the professional independence and work of lawyers, including the rights of their clients to have access to legal representation.

As the LSSA we reiterate the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which state that: ‘Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference and that lawyers shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards and ethics’.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, BUSANI MABUNDA AND RICHARD SCOTT

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Editor's note:

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 23 600 attorneys and 5 400 candidate attorneys.