



LAW SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA
PRESS RELEASE

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**LAW SOCIETY CONCERNED AT THREATS AGAINST LAWYERS AND JUDGES IN
LESOTHO**

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) expresses its solidarity with our colleagues in Lesotho and also its serious concern at reports from our colleagues of threats being experienced by lawyers and judges involved in matters relating to Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) soldiers who were alleged to have mutinied earlier this year.

The LSSA has resolved to send observers to LDF-related matters in the Maseru High Court on 2 December 2015 in solidarity with our colleagues from Lesotho and to ensure that they can pursue their duties as lawyers without fear.

The LSSA has been informed by the Law Society of Lesotho that defence lawyers have experienced threats to themselves and their families, court orders have been ignored and judges intimidated. Lawyers have also been denied access to their clients.

'The LSSA calls on the Lesotho authorities at all times to uphold and respect the Rule of Law, the independence of the judiciary and of legal practitioners. In addition, the Lesotho authorities must ensure that due process of the law is respected in this matter without subjecting the accused to any form of abuse of their rights, this includes the right to have access to legal representation,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Richard Scott and Busani Mabunda.

In addition, they stress: "The Lesotho authorities must safeguard the right of legal practitioners to practise freely without fear of intimidation, arrest or assault. Lawyers must be able to consult freely with their clients to provide effective representation. What our colleagues in Lesotho are being subjected to represents an infringement of 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, RICHARD SCOTT AND BUSANI MABUNDA

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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 24 000 attorneys and 5 900 candidate attorneys.