



## DHPI: HURLEY DIALOGUE

### *QUO VADIS, LESOTHO?*

### WHERE TO, LESOTHO?

#### Introduction

Denis Hurley Peace Institute (DHPI) hosted a Hurley Dialogue on Lesotho. The killing of Lt. Gen. Maaparankoe Mahao on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 brought the Lesotho problems to the fore. Many army officials were arrested but only 23 are being charged of mutiny and they are being kept at the Maximum prison in Maseru while some are in exile. The wives and children of these officials have been traumatized by this experience. Some of the leaders of the opposition parties have gone in exile. A commission of inquiry was instituted that led to the Judge Phumaphi Report whose findings were not accepted by many in the ruling party.

Presently many people are not clear about what is currently happening in Lesotho, what type of discussions are going on? Where does the opposition stand in all this? What can be done to help Lesotho to resolve its challenges? What has the Civil Society and Churches done to in this situation to address the current challenges? What can help Lesotho to move forward from this situation? It is up to the leaders in Lesotho to come together and seek a lasting solution to the Lesotho problems. As the most powerful politicians and army have their public outbreaks and following the events of violence in August 2014, the ordinary Basotho people are the ones who end up suffering the most. We believe that as long as one of the countries in Southern Africa is unstable, it affects all its neighbours.

Three different political parties from Lesotho had been invited but only the All Basotho Convention Party led by the former Prime Minister attended. Some organisations from the Civil Society were also invited to make presentation on their views on the direction of Lesotho. To give a personal perspective to the effects of the challenges of Lesotho, Mrs. Mahao was invited also invited to share her experience.

The dialogue was attended by representatives from different Embassies, UN departments, human rights Organisations, Catholic Church clergy and groups, university lectures, COSATU, representatives from Lesotho and other African countries such as South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and DRC.

#### **Makatlheho Mohasi: Transformation Resources Centre (TRC), Lesotho**

She gave the political overview of the Lesotho situation. She pointed out that democracy remains fragile as Lesotho is shifting from one political crisis to another. The Phumaphi Report was seen as an opportunity to address the situation. There has been a collapse of talks between government and opposition.

Lt. General Kamoli (current Commander of the Lesotho Defence Forces (LDF)) remains a challenge. 23 soldiers still remain in maximum prison in appalling conditions.

The Phumaphi report reflected that in Lesotho, there is evidence of political instability. It recommended that Lt. General Kamoli be relieved of his duties. Some of the current problems in the country emanate from the constitution of Lesotho. The case of mutiny against the 23 soldiers is suspect. The response by the Lesotho government to the Phumaphi report was offering blanket amnesty to the soldiers charged with mutiny and also those charged with murder of Lt. Gen. Mahao. The demand by TRC is that amnesty must go with full disclosure especially for the soldiers who participated in the killing of Lt. Gen. Mahao. The Lesotho government is not committed to the removal of Lt. Gen. Kamoli as the Commander of the Lesotho Defense Forces.

**Dr. Thomas Thabane: Former Prime Minister of Lesotho and President of All Basotho Convention (ABC).**

Dr. Tom Thabane gave a critique of the situation in Lesotho and the reasons why he left Lesotho to seek refuge in South Africa. Dr. Thabane pointed out that Lesotho democracy lacked the checks and balances. He also pointed out that the late Lt. Gen. Mahao had been a friend and collaborator for many years. Lesotho is classified in the least developed nations after so many years of independence. In 2014, “I was defeated in the elections and I peacefully handed over power to the current Prime Minister [Pakalitha Mosisili],” said the former Prime Minister. He pointed out that Lesotho had a coalition government but it lacked the legal requirements. Since independence [October 4, 1966], the security establishment has interfered in the political arena. Lesotho also has a situation where the small political parties are holding the big parties [Democratic Congress led by Pakalitha Mosisili and All Basotho Convention led by Dr. T. Thabane] to ransom as it is difficult for one party to win an absolute majority. In the last elections, his party obtained 38.37% of the votes while the ruling party had 37.75%. The ruling party then went into coalition with the smaller parties. The Lesotho Defense forces have been politicised to such an extent that a civilian leader seems to need a key ally which is the army. “The last 50 years of Lesotho can be considered as the lost years as there have been little reform in Lesotho,” said Dr. T. Thabane.

Dr. Thabane said that while he was the Prime Minister of Lesotho, he fired Kamoli from being the commander of Lesotho Defense Forces for insubordination and Lt. Gen. Mahao was his choice as the successor of Kamoli. He felt that there was a need for the army to be controlled by civilian authority.

Dr. Thabane commented that he is currently living in South Africa as a guest because “I left home for fear of my life.” The present Prime Minister: Mosisili has invited Dr. Thabane to go back to Lesotho but he will consider going back when Lt. Gen. Kamoli has been removed from office as Lt. Gen. Kamoli threatened to kill him.

Dr. Thabane also pointed out that there are some exiled soldiers from Lesotho who are currently staying in the Free State Province of South Africa. There is no organised material/resource support for them.

Dr. Thabane stated that SADC has been very good to Lesotho as it has tried to help them to solve their internal challenges. President Ian Khama [of Botswana] has been very strong about the Lesotho situation. Khama's voice is not being recognised by other SADC leaders.

"The Prime Minister Mosisili is afraid to fire Kamoli. He fears him, said Dr. Thabane. According to Dr. Thabane, The army is not beneficial to Lesotho. Lesotho as a country can do without the army. The police force can be used to maintain law and order. He does not see whether the Lesotho Defence Force is capable of fighting and winning any war with any invading force.

Commenting on the role of South Africa in which Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa has been the official mediator. "My own view is that he (Ramaphosa) could have done more."

## **Church**

According to Dr. Thabane, the Church is very important because it can tell leaders how to behave. The Church has such a big role. Sometimes the Church gives way to leaders that end up thinking that they are better than the rest. "Lesotho is truly a country in trouble and the Church needs to come our rescue, said Dr. Thabane.

## **Mrs. Mamphanya Mahao: Wife of the late Lt. Gen. Mahao**

The Last speaker was Mrs. Mamphanya Mahao, the wife of the late Lt. Gen. Mahao. She talked about "*where from, where we are and then where to?*" She defined the Lesotho situation as that of crime and lawlessness. The Lesotho Defense Forces has always been at the centre of conflict in Lesotho. Lt. Gen Mahao stance has been that of letting the political problems be solved politically as he saw his duty as that of protecting lives and not of taking political sides. "My husband was never liked by the opposition or government, said Mrs. Mahao. According to Mrs. Mahao, the present commander Lt. Gen. Kamoli's re-appointment as the commander of Lesotho Defense Force was illegal. She sees the present Lesotho Defence Forces as a political party in alliance with the present ruling party.

She also shared that there were many attempts on her husband's life.

Talking about the interventions by Cyril Ramaphosa, she said that, she felt insulted when Ramaphosa came to Lesotho and did not meet with her family.

She also said that she was also representing the wives of the detained soldiers and that the soldiers in prison were procedurally arrested. "They were abducted and not arrested." According to her, there have been many abuses of rights of the soldiers such as right to a fair trial. The lawyers representing the soldiers have been attacked. "We feel that we are not really protected in our own country. We also lack confidence in our courts of law," said Mrs. Mahao. Kamoli is viewed as the law unto himself in Lesotho by the women of the arrested soldiers. Women have formed a solidarity so as to comfort and strengthen each other. Their children have also been affected and on Fathers' Day, the children organised a Fathers' Day walk to Maximum prison to show their solidarity with their fathers in prison.

Currently, Mrs. Mahao is not staying at her home as it is deemed to be unsafe to do so. Speaking about the right to life, she said the unrest in Lesotho has made her to lose her husband. The Prime Minister Mosisili is advocating for general amnesty which includes the soldiers who murdered her husband without asking them to tell the truth about what happened.

Speaking to the where to, she said that “we are going deeper and deeper into lawlessness in Lesotho. There is need to have security reforms and the present government has lost its authority over the military and this needs to be restored.”

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