

PRESS RELEASE

ON JUNE 1ST 1999, THE LEADERS OF THE LESOTHO OPPOSITION ALLIANCE PARTIES, (THE B.N.P., B.C.P. AND M.F.P.) ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT IN WHICH THEY PURPORTED TO "CONDEMN THE RECENT SPATE OF MURDERS OF MEMBERS OF THE LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE BY AGENTS OF DARKNESS, WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO MUDDY THE WATERS AND HINDER PROGRESS IN CURRENT PREPARATIONS TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD AHEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE YEAR 2000."

THEY GO ON TO REFER TO THE ASSASSINATION OF THE FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, HONOURABLE SELOMETSU BAHOLO, AND TO SUGGEST THAT HIS DEATH SHOULD HAVE BEEN A SUBJECT OF A PUBLIC ENQUIRY MISCHIEVOUSLY FORGETTING THAT THERE WAS, INFACT, AN INQUIRY INTO THE ARMY DISTURBANCES OF 1994 DURING WHICH HONOURABLE BAHOLO WAS ASSASSINATED!

TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE ISSUE OF THAT ASSASSINATION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE HONOURABLE BAHOLO WAS MURDERED, OSTENSIBLY BY MEMBERS OF THE LESOTHO

DEFENCE FORCE, THE POLICE ARRIVED AT THE SCENE, SOON AFTER THE EVENT, AND CONDUCTED THE NECESSARY INVESTIGATIONS.

THE NEXT STEP IN THESE INVESTIGATIONS WAS TO INTERVIEW WITNESSES IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE IDENTITY OF THE SUSPECTS WHO WERE ALL MEMBERS OF THE LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE. AT THAT TIME THE POLICE DID NOT OBTAIN ACCESS TO THESE PERSONS BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND SEVERALLY BECAUSE OF THE ABNORMAL CONDITIONS THAT OBTAINED IN THE COUNTRY WHICH HAD RENDERED MEMBERS OF THE ARMY ALMOST UNTOUCHABLE.

SOME OF THE LEADERS OF THE ABOVE OPPOSITION ALLIANCE WERE CABINET MINISTERS IN THE B.C.P. GOVERNMENT OF THE TIME AND THEY KNOW THESE FACTS. AT THE MOMENT, THE POLICE ARE ARRESTING SUSPECTS FOR QUESTIONING AND BECAUSE THEY ARE ARRESTING ARMY PERSONNEL THEY HAVE SOUGHT AND OBTAINED THE ASSISTANCE OF THE MILITARY POLICE. THIS PROCESS IS A LAW AND ORDER OPERATION, IN WHICH NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE RULING LESOTHO CONGRESS FOR DEMOCRACY HAS ANY ROLE TO PLAY NOR ANY INTEREST BEYOND ITS STEADFAST BELIEF IN THE RULE OF LAW.

IF, INDEED, THE OPPOSITION ALLIANCE NEEDS TRANSPARENCY THEY MUST AWAIT THE IMPENDING COURT CASE WHICH WILL BE HELD IN AN OPEN COURT. MOREOVER, IF INDEED THEY "STAND READY TO LEND FULL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO THOSE ENGAGED IN AN EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT JUSTICE IS DONE IN THIS CASE" THEY SHOULD APPROACH THE C.I.D. CALLING A LEGITIMATE POLICE INVESTIGATION A "WITCH HUNT" IS CERTAINLY NOT BEING HELPFUL BUT IRRESPONSIBLE IN THE EXTREME.

IN THE PAST FEW DAYS THREE MEMBERS OF THE LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE HAVE DIED VIOLENTLY IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS. ONE SERGEANT MOKHESUOE WHO LIVED IN THE VILLAGE OF THETSANE WAS SHOT BY AN UNKNOWN ASSAILANT AFTER DISAGREEMENT HAD RISEN BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS NEIGHBOURS. THIS HAPPENED AFTER MEDIATION BY THE LOCAL CHIEF AND THE MILITARY POLICE HAD FAILED TO PRODUCE ANY RESULTS, AND AFTER THE WOULD-BE MEDIATORS HAD DEPARTED. THIS MATTER IS UNDER POLICE INVESTIGATION.

THE SECOND CASE IS THAT OF ONE PRIVATE MOHAPI WHO WAS ALSO SHOT BY AN UNKNOWN ASSAILANT OUTSIDE A "SHEBEEN" OR "BEER HALL" AT HA TS'OSANE VILLAGE AS HE WAS LEAVING THAT "SHEBEEN" WHERE HE HAD BEEN DRINKING WITH SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE. HERE AGAIN THE POLICE ARE MAKING INVESTIGATIONS. THE THIRD CASE IS THAT OF PRIVATE SEBOTSA WHO IS ALLEGED TO HAVE HANGED HIMSELF AFTER TAKING RAT POISON EARLIER THAT DAY. PRIVATE SEBOTSA WAS BEING SOUGHT BY THE POLICE FOR HIS SUSPECTED INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMINAL ACTS.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT DURING THE ARMY DISTURBANCES IN 1994 AT LEAST THREE DEATHS OCCURRED, NAMELY THAT OF THE HONOURABLE BAHOLO AND TWO MEMBERS OF THE LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE.

ALL THESE MURDERS ARE UNDER ACTIVE POLICE INVESTIGATION BECAUSE CONDITIONS ARE NOW CONDUCTIVE FOR SUCH INVESTIGATIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT ANY FEAR OF INTERFERENCE BY INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE.

THIS SITUATION UNDERLINES THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS OF THE S.A.D.C. INTERVENTION WHICH HAS SINCE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE LESOTHO POLICE TO CARRY OUT THEIR LAWFUL DUTIES WITHOUT FEAR OF INTIMIDATION BY MEMBERS OF THE ARMY WHERE THEY THEMSELVES ARE SUSPECTS OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. FOR ANYBODY, NOT TO MENTION POLITICAL LEADERS, TO SEE A WITCH HUNT WHEN THE POLICE FINALLY GET ROUND TO BRINGING TO BOOK PERPETRATORS OF HEINOUS KILLINGS IS HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE IF NOT LAUGHABLE. THE C.I.D. AND MILITARY POLICE DESERVE EVERYONE'S SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT AND INDEED CONGRATULATIONS INSTEAD OF CONDEMNATION. IT IS PATENTLY HYPOCRITICAL FOR THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL ALLIANCE TO SEE THIS DEVELOPMENT AS ANYTHING BUT WELCOME AND COMMENDABLE

2ND JUNE, 1999