



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Civil Society Leadership Statement On Circumstances Facing TRC

The Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN) as an umbrella body for non-governmental organisations in Lesotho jointly with its member organisations, through its Sectorial Commission of Democracy and Human Rights whose mandate amidst others, is to monitor the promotion and protection of human rights in Lesotho having followed with keen interest the developments at the Transformation Resource Centre since the allegation that its Executive Director has been suspended on account of suspected corruption, the Human Rights and Democracy Commission makes this pronouncement:

MEDIA CONDUCT

The media reportage about the situation at TRC is generally within the mandate of the sector to inform and educate. However, the Commission has learned that the media report that the TRC Executive Director has been suspended by the Board pending investigation on corruption and other allegations, which generated public interest, was not accurate. When the TRC Board released the statement strengthening the facts to the effect that it has not suspended the Executive Director or any member of staff whatsoever save that staff complained about some issues which were being attended to, the media did not pick that. This did not only leave the inaccurate information in the public domain but subjected the organisation to unfair and unwarranted public scrutiny. On the matters raised in the employees' petition was that the EU has withdrawn its support to TRC because of concerns over its credibility to handle donor funds. The EU Maseru issued a commentary giving an explanation contrary to what the media report presented. The media has not taken steps to correct this as well.

There have been reports again that the TRC Executive Director was at the police custody and was likely to spend the night there over the allegations of sexual harassment on the staff. While it may not be refuted that some TRC employees reported the matter at the police, it is not correct that the Executive Director has been in police custody on this matter at that time. Why this kind of reporting?

The Commission notes that because of these inaccurate reports, the organisation and potentially the sector has suffered an image dent. The Commission wishes to call upon media to continue doing its work with due diligence so that no one in the delivery of their mandate gets unfairly injured.

In the normal operations and indeed in the fair and good media practice, errors, mistakes, and inaccuracies in the reports are acknowledged and dully retracted. Where such huge allegations about an advocacy organisation are done, realised but ignored, there is a concern. Could this be deliberate move to undermine TRC in the face of the public that it serves, donor partners and its membership?

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AT HAND AT TRC

The Commission has learned that TRC has commissioned the inquiry into the allegations which has released its report. While the Commission, appreciates that this is an internal matter, wishes to encourage all the concerned to apply restraint and seek amicable solution that will sustain the organisation.

On the sexual harassment allegations, it is in the Commission interest to ensure the matter is brought to finality and that justice is served and therefore make a plea for public to give justice system a chance. The public will be kept abreast of all developments, as the matter progresses.

The Commission is aware of the sensitivity of the issue and impresses upon the law enforcing agencies to fast track the matter so that necessary clarity on the matter is expeditiously cast.

AN APPEAL

The Commission appeals to the media to continue with its good work of informing and educating without fear or favour. At all material times, media should observe ethical and fair reporting. The Commission remain available and steadfast in engaging whoever in the light of public discourse.

END

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Founded in 1990

The primary mission of the council is to stimulate, promote and support NGO's in their development effort. In pursuit of this mission, The National Council will assist its member organisations to diagnose and satisfy their own needs as well as the needs of the society they serve. It will assist member organisations to be increasingly more effective in meeting their goals and to be able to initiate and maintain self-supporting and self-sustaining development and, therefore, fulfil their role in the upliftment of the disadvantaged and underprivileged and society at large.

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