

# Sunday Express

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## I don't want to be PM: Moleleki

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# D-DAY FOR THABANE



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Pascalinah Kabi

# D-Day for Thabane

**E**MBATTLED Prime Minister Thomas Thabane is today expected to address the nation about his future as pressure mounts for him to go.

Government Secretary Moahloli Mphaka told the *Sunday Express* that Mr Thabane would either address the nation today or tomorrow on his future. South African special envoy to Lesotho Jeff Radebe had earlier told the media that the premier would address the nation yesterday. Mr Mphaka said that couldn't happen as the people assisting the premier with his speech were not readily available.

He would not be drawn into disclosing the details of the premier's expected statement. It is however widely expected that Mr Thabane will announce when he is leaving power. The premier had previously promised to retire end of July 2020 but pressure has since mounted on him to go much sooner.

His All Basotho Convention (ABC) and the Democratic Congress (DC) have inked a deal to form a new coalition government excluding him. They had given him until yesterday to quit or face a humiliating vote of no confidence this week by when King Letsie 111 would have signed the constitutional amendment bill (number 9) into law.

The landmark bill clips a prime minister's powers to dissolve parliament and order fresh elections whenever they lose a no confidence vote. It was overwhelmingly passed by the Senate on Tuesday. It could become law as soon as tomorrow after the King signs it.

Mr Radebe told the media at the end of his latest visit that the timeframe for Mr Thabane's departure would now be determined by the speed with which Attorney General Haae Phoofolo and Speaker of Parliament Sefhiri Motanyane presented the bill to the King for signature.

Mr Radebe was back in Lesotho barely two weeks after his 19 to 20 April visit.

It was not clear what prompted his latest visit but Mr Radebe hinted that South Africa had been alerted to the deteriorating security situation in Lesotho. He did meet with security chiefs this time round unlike during his first visit. It had been rumoured that the army, or a faction of the army, had wanted to arrest police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli as part of Mr Thabane's unrelenting efforts to fire the top cop. Mr Thabane has lost at least five different court cases in his bid to fire, suspend or forcibly retire the commissioner.

Commissioner Molibeli was meant to have been arrested during the army deployment of Saturday 18 April 2020 but it did not happen. Mr Molibeli later told the *Lesotho Times* his arrest had been averted after Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander Mojalefa Letsoela refused to comply with an order to



JEFF Radebe.

arrest him.

Mr Radebe said he had been pleased with his interactions with the security chiefs, describing them as highly professional. He met with Lt-Gen Letsoela, Commissioner Molibeli, National Security Service Director Pheello Ralenkoane and Lesotho Correctional Service Commissioner Thabang Mothepu on Friday.

He said the meeting was extremely cordial and the security chiefs gave Mr Radebe and his team a lot of information "about what is happening from their perspective".

He said they got an impression that the security chiefs were professional and executed their duties in terms of the law "without fear, favour or prejudice".

"We believe that the people of Lesotho, in both political office and security services, can work together to ensure a peaceful transition so that the principal task of creating a better life for the people of Lesotho can proceed.

"I must emphasize that the security chiefs of Lesotho are very united in the manner in which they conduct their professional duties to serve the people and their country," Mr Radebe said.

Mr Radebe's trip was also said to have been caused by South Africa's unhappiness over Mr Thabane's re-

cent remarks that he would not be pushed out of office by anyone. He would only leave at his own volition. The premier's remarks in an interview with the *Lesotho Times* appeared to be a severe slight at Mr Radebe, who had just left Lesotho with a pledge that processes for the premier's departure would start immediately. Mr Thabane had then declared he won't be pushed out of office by people "I don't report to".

Mr Thabane's opponents had equally expressed unhappiness over Mr Radebe's remarks at the end of his first visit. They said he had failed to capture the essence of their demand that Mr Thabane must resign forthwith.

ABC spokesperson Montoeli Masoetsa this week said the party had consequently given Mr Thabane until today to step down failing which he would face a humiliating no confidence vote in parliament.

Mr Radebe had also met the ABC's national executive committee (NEC), Senate President Mamonaheng Mokitimi, Senate Chief Whip and Thaba-Bosiu Principal Chief Khoabane Theko, Director of Public Prosecutions DPP Adv Hlalefang Motinyane, Mr Thabane as well as his coalition partners.

Mr Radebe said Mr Thabane's departure now hinged on when King

Letsie III appends his signature to the constitutional amendment bill, suggesting the premier could now leave much sooner than his avowed July date.

"A statement will be issued sometime today (Saturday) by the prime minister... The real timeline (for Mr Thabane's exit) is dependent on when the Attorney General and the Speaker of the National Assembly transmit the information and the document (bill) for the attention of His Majesty the King which we expect to happen any minute from now," Mr Radebe said.

Asked to categorically state if Lesotho should expect a new prime minister this week, Mr Radebe said "...It is for the officials of Lesotho to say.

"As I have indicated the office of the Attorney General has to make sure that this (bill) is transmitted as soon as possible for the attention of His Majesty the King".

He said he had briefed Mr Thabane about his meetings with different stakeholders. There was consensus that the processes leading to the signing of the constitutional amendment bill into law be expedited, he said.

He said Adv Phoofolo confirmed he had received copies of the bill and the parliamentary legal office

"was in the process of clearing the copies for Adv Phoofolo to certify them".

Mr Radebe said Adv Phoofolo had to prematurely leave their meeting yesterday morning to ensure that all the officials tasked with clearing the bill speeded up the process.

"If he (Adv Phoofolo) is able to meet them today, then the King will have the bill on his desk tomorrow (Sunday) or latest Monday. We are satisfied that when His Majesty has assented to the bill, it will pave the way for the prime minister to indicate his intention to vacate the office of prime minister.

"The office of the prime minister is going to brief the media and issue a statement to that effect today (sat)."

Mr Thabane did not address the nation though. Mr Mphaka subsequently told this publication that "the prime minister will issue the statement either tomorrow (Sunday) or Monday". He said officers responsible for working on the statement were not readily available for the task.

Mr Thabane's party had demanded that he quits soon after he was earlier this year accused of murdering his ex-wife Lipolelo to pave way for his current marriage to the much younger 'Maesaiah. The now outgoing First Lady has already been charged with the murder and is out on M1000 bail. Mr Thabane appeared in court but was not charged after telling the magistrate he was going to the Constitutional Court for any order prohibiting him from being charged with any offence as long as he remains a sitting premier.

The ABC/DC deal is expected to catapult Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro to the much-coveted post of prime minister as soon as Mr Thabane quits. He will be deputised by DC leader Mathibeli Mokhothu.

DC deputy leader Motlalentoa Letsosa this week demanded Mr Thabane's immediate departure to facilitate the formation of the new government without any further delays.

Despite all the pressure, Mr Thabane had cut a defiant posture, telling the *Lesotho Times* that he will only leave at his own volition. These remarks are said to have angered the South African government and on Wednesday Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki led a government delegation to Pretoria to douse the flames.

Mr Moleleki was accompanied on that trip by ministers Lesego Makgothi (Foreign Affairs and International Relations), Habofanoe Lehana (Law and Constitutional Affairs) and Adv Phoofolo.

## I don't want to be PM: Moleleki

Pascalinah Kabi

**D**EPUTY Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki yesterday denied allegations that he had told South African special envoy Jeff Radebe that he wanted to be appointed interim prime minister as soon as embattled Prime Minister Thomas Thabane steps down.

Mr Thabane has previously said he would retire at the end of July but he has come under intense pressure from his own All Basotho Convention (ABC) to go now. (See story above).

Some government sources have alleged that Mr Moleleki had told Mr Radebe that in

the event that Mr Thabane goes sooner, he (Mr Moleleki) should take over in an interim capacity at least until July 2020.

By then Mr Moleleki would be eligible for his retirement benefits. He was appointed deputy prime minister in June 2017 at the formation of the governing four party coalition comprising of his Alliance of Democrats (AD), Mr Thabane's ABC, Communications, Science and Technology Minister Thesele 'Maseribane's Basotho National Party (BNP) and Labour and Employment Minister Keketso Rantso's Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL).

He only qualifies for his terminal benefits in June 2020 after the required three years

of service. Any premature collapse of the government will see him go home empty-handed.

Hence his alleged desire to take over from Mr Thabane in the event of the latter stepping down at least before the end of June.

But Mr Moleleki rejected all those allegations. The deputy prime minister told the *Sunday Express* yesterday he never told Mr Radebe he wants to take over in an acting capacity when Mr Thabane retires.

"I am not responding to this issue (of taking over from Mr Thabane) because I have never expressed such a wish to anyone," Mr Moleleki said, adding, "let's leave it as it is".

Pressed for more information, Mr Moleleki said, "I haven't commented on the matter because I have never expressed such a wish".

He said he had refrained from commenting on the current political situation in the country lest he be misinterpreted by the warring factions within the ABC.

"Allow me to start by being general on this matter. I am in a coalition government with a party that is fighting with its leader and it is generally not advisable for me to comment in such a situation. By commenting publicly, I will be interpreted by the one side as supporting the other side.

"So, I have to be careful. I know that I am regularly accused of being quiet... There is no accusation that I enjoy more than that one. Who do people expect me to support between the two factions in the party that I am in partnership with...?" He asked rhetorically.

Continues on page 5...

# Lawyers sue Thabane, army and police chiefs

Mohalenyane Phakela

**T**HE Lesotho Lawyers for Human Rights (LLHR) has filed a Constitutional Court application to stop army commander Mojalefa Letsoela, police commissioner Holomo Molibeli and their subordinates from torturing ordinary citizens. They also want them stopped from subjecting ordinary citizens to any other forms of degrading and inhuman treatment.

This follows allegations that soldiers and police officers have been assaulting civilians accused of violating lockdown regulations requiring them to stay at home as part of efforts to fight the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The Constitutional Court will tomorrow give a date for the hearing of the case.

The LLHR is joined in the application by one Khabang Lesuhlo who alleges he was tortured by the police in Thaba Tseka. Prime Minister Thomas Thabane, Police and Public Safety Minister Lehlohonolo Moramotse, Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander Letsoela, police commissioner Molibeli, The Officer Commanding Thaba Tseka Police Station, Sergeant Thamae, one Sergeant Tsoinyane and Attorney General Haee Phoofolo are the first to ninth respondents respectively.

In their application, the LLHR and Mr Lesuhlo detail several cases wherein civilians were allegedly tortured by army and police officers during the lockdown. They argue that the incidents have been reported to the police but no action has been taken against the culprits.

The applicants want the court to order Mr Thabane to direct Lt-Gen Letsoela and Commissioner Molibeli to account for the brutality of their subordinates against civilians since the lockdown began on 30 March 2020. The lockdown is expected to end on Tuesday.

The applicants also want Lt-Gen Letsoela, Commissioner Molibeli and their subordinates to “be interdicted and restrained from assaulting, torturing members of the public and subjecting them to any form of inhuman and degrading treatment”.



HOLOMO Molibeli (left) and Mojalefa Letsoela.

“That the third and fourth respondents (Lt-Gen Letsoela and Commissioner Molibeli respectively) and officers subordinate to them be directed not to deal with any member of the public found or suspected to be in breach of the Public Health (Covid-19) Regulations, 2020 in any manner other than by due process of the law.

“That the third respondent (Lt-Gen Letsoela) be directed to initiate criminal processes to exact accountability from all members of the LDF who assaulted or tortured members of the public before and after the passing of the Public Health (Covid-19) Regulations 2020. The said victims of human rights violations be appraised of the progress in the accountability process from time to time. That the

fourth respondent (Commissioner Molibeli) and officers subordinate to him be directed to arrest and initiate criminal processes against all members of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) and LDF who assaulted or tortured members of the public ... and deal with them according to the law...”

In his founding affidavit, LLHR president Advocate Zwelakhe Mda states that the Public Health (Covid-19) Regulations 2020 do not authorise the army and police to torture civilians.

“Indeed, there is no law that authorises members of the law enforcement agencies to take the law unto themselves...”

“No sooner had the state of emergency and the said health regulations been passed, a chorus of com-

plaints by the public about the brutality and savagery of members of the LMPS and LDF surfaced,” Adv Mda KC states.

The prominent lawyer lists several cases of human rights violations that were reported to the police but have allegedly not been dealt with.

Among these is the case of one Molefi Filoane who was allegedly tortured by police officers near Dion Butchery in Maseru on 30 March 2020.

There is also the case of Monnana Makepe who was allegedly assaulted by soldiers in Borokhoaneng, Maseru on 3 April 2020; one Thabang Mohlalise who was allegedly assaulted by soldiers at his home in Maseru and one Tsekiso Lepolesa who was shot by police on the right hand and left thigh in Ha Thamae,

Maseru on 9 April 2020.

There is also the case of Malefetsane Mosuhli who was allegedly assaulted by soldiers in Qacha's Nek; Mr Lesuhlo who was allegedly tortured by Sergeants Thamae and Tsoinyane in Thaba Tseka and one Fusi Nomo who died after allegedly being tortured and suffocated by Morija police on 25 April 2020.

Adv Mda also blames Mr Thabane for inciting police to violate the rights of citizens.

“Police brutality has always been a problem within the ranks of LMPS, (but) it was not officially sanctioned from the top. However, during 2017 after the first respondent (Mr Thabane) took office, on various occasions at a rally, in an interview with the national television and in parliament, he said the police should beat thieves and crime suspects. No doubt these statements had enormous impact on the psyche of police who were already prone to such excesses.

“There have been so many violations of suspects' rights while in police custody throughout the country and some have resulted into deaths of suspects. The number of such homicides presently stands at 72 deaths.

“What is alarming and raises serious concern is that second and fourth respondents (Mr Moramotse and Commissioner Molibeli) have never addressed the issue of these gruesome murders and torture of suspects in custody. Sadly, it remains business as usual in the LMPS under the command of the fourth respondent.

“It is clear from conduct complained of that some members of LMPS and LDF do not acknowledge their obligation to uphold the rule of law. Neither have the third and fourth respondents (Lt-Gen Letsoela and Commissioner Molibeli respectively) demonstrated the will to hold their members accountable.

“It is the duty of the government to protect all citizens whether detained or not against any violations of their human rights as enshrined in the constitution... It is clear from the foregoing that the government has not acquitted itself well in this respect,” Adv Mda states.

# Govt lagging behind in Covid-19 response: minister



Limpho Sello

**D**eputy Minister of Health Manthabiseng Phohleli (pictured) has admitted that the government is lagging behind in its preparedness and response to the deadly Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Speaking during a recent China-Africa video teleconference on combating Covid-19 hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Maseru, Ms Phohleli said Lesotho lacked sufficient medical equipment as well as personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent the spread of the virus.

Thirteen African countries participated in the video conference and Lesotho was represented by Ms Phohleli, Director General for Health Services Dr Nyane Letsie, and the Incidence Manager for COVID-19, Dr Llang Maama.

Ms Phohleli said although the country had received some donations from Chi-

nese businessman and philanthropist, Jack Ma, it still lacked equipment such as ventilators and PPEs. She said the government needed to do more to spread awareness on Covid-19.

“We appreciate that there is a consignment coming all the way from the Jack Ma Foundation in China but we still have inadequate medical equipment and PPEs,” Ms Phohleli said.

“I noted with great concern during the video conference when (Chinese) Professor Zunyou Wu stressed the importance of oxygen. Oxygen is critical for Covid-19 patients.

“We are working towards finalising the procurement of an oxygen unit and other medical equipment and supplies. We are also working on building awareness of the Covid-19 prevention which is still lacking.”

She said despite all the challenges Lesotho was blessed because it had not recorded any Covid-19 infections. After Comoros record-

ed its first case on Thursday, Lesotho is now officially the only African country without Covid-19 cases.

Ms Phohleli said although Lesotho had not recorded any Covid-19 cases, there were still concerns that Basotho who illegally crossed into the country from South Africa could spread infections.

“There has not been any recorded case of Covid-19 but there are concerns that illegal migrants who cross the border everyday pose a threat to the country.”

She said as a result the government was strengthening surveillance at the ports of entry and had also deployed doctors and nurses to health centres specifically to fight Covid-19.

“We have started training for health professionals around the country on Covid-19 surveillance, case management and infection prevention and control.

“We have also established quarantine centres,” said Ms Phohleli.

Ntsebenz Motsoeli

# Mapesela attacks Thabane over state of emergency

**O**UTSPOKEN All Basotho Convention (ABC) legislator and former minister Tefo Mapesela has criticised Prime Minister Thomas Thabane for his “unconstitutional” move to extend the state of emergency declare a six months state of emergency from 14 to 28 April 2020.

Mr Thabane initially declared the state of emergency on 30 March to 14 April 2020. The state of emergency was then used as a basis for declaring a nationwide lockdown as part of efforts to fight the deadly coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Mr Thabane subsequently extended the state of emergency from 14 to 28 April 2020 without the approval of parliament as required by the constitution.

He even wanted to extend by six months but the move was rejected by the opposition on 28 April 2020. The opposition parliamentarians called for wider consultations before the motion could be deliberated in the National Assembly.

During a recent session in the National Assembly, the Mokhotlong legislator said Mr Thabane was “out of order” and had acted illegally when he extended state of emergency without the approval of parliament.

“The Right Honourable Prime Minister released a gazette that declared a state of emergency in accordance with the constitution,” Mr Mapesela said.

“The prime minister is only allowed by the constitution to declare a state of emergency for 14 days and thereafter it can only be extended with the approval of parliament. But there was another gazette that extended the state of emergency (without parliament’s approval).

“It is our appeal that issues of the extension state of emergency and lockdown must be implemented within the confines of the law. It is unconstitutional (and) out of order for the prime minister to extend a state of emergency beyond 14 days on his own.”

The speaker of the National Assembly, Sefhiri Motanyane, acknowledged Mr Mapesela’s contributions and asked that “those who are responsible” be given the time to legalise the state of emergency and the lockdown. The lockdown was initially supposed to end on 21 April but it was extended to 5 May 2020.

“I heard you loud and clear. For our own sakes, I request that we give those who are responsible time to legalise the extensions of the state



TEFO Mapesela.

of emergency and the lockdown,” Mr Motanyane said.

Attorney General Haae Phoofolo also weighed in on the issue, saying the extension of the lockdown would be illegal if parliament did not consent to the extension of the state of emergency.

However, Mr Thabane and Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki’s attempts to extend the state of emergency were resisted on Tuesday by opposition members questioned the wisdom behind the move.

“The current state of emergen-

cy ends today (Tuesday 28 April 2020) but the danger we are facing against COVID-19 is more than we could ever imagine,” Mr Thabane had said.

“For that reason, it would be advisable to continue the efforts to protect the people from the virus.

According to section 23 of the Constitution of 1993, the power to extend the state of emergency against this disease lies with the parliament.

“I therefore request this august House to approve the extension of the state of emergency against COVID-19 for six months. This will help the government to take appropriate measures to fight the virus while we gradually lift the lockdown to restore normalcy.”

And Mr Moleleki followed up on the prime minister’s request by proposing a motion for the house to approve the six months state of emergency.

He said the motion was important and advised the house against opposing it as the government had the option of effecting recurrent 14-day states of emergency for six months.

However, Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) leader Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane opposed the motion saying the government should instead use the Disaster Management Act to declare a state of disaster in the fight against the possible spread of COVID-19. According to the Disaster Management Act, the prime minister only requires the advice of the Disaster Management Authority to declare a state of disaster.

He accused Mr Thabane of pushing a political agenda through the declaration of a state of emergency. He said the declaration of a state of emergency had political connotations given the recent deployment of the army around Maseru by Mr Thabane.

The premier deployed the army on 18 April 2020 claiming the move was necessary to deal with what he called rogue elements bent on destabilising his government. The soldiers however, returned to their barracks later that day.

In the wake of spirited opposition from the opposition, Mr Mapesela suggested that parliament should defer the deliberations on the motion to extend the state of emergency until members have had time to discuss it outside the house.

Mr Moleleki subsequently withdrew the motion on Tuesday and he is yet to re-table it before the house.

## Govt sets aside M4 million for Basotho stuck in SA

Ntsebenz Motsoeli

**T**HE government has set aside M4 million to assist 13 000 Basotho who are in need for aid in neighbouring South Africa, the chairperson of the sub-committee of cabinet ministers on COVID-19, Chief Thesele ‘Maseribane, has said.

Last week hundreds of Basotho, who are stuck in South Africa since the commencement of that country’s lockdown on 26 March 2020 to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), called on government to provide them with food relief. They said they had run out of money to purchase any food.

Their representatives last week said they had gone without food for days and all their calls for government assistance were fruitless.

The South African government was also prioritising its own citizens whenever it rolls out assistance programmes. As a result, some have been evicted from their rented accommodation due to their failure to pay rentals.

On 28 April Chief ‘Maseribane told parliament that government had set aside M4 million to assist the 13 000 Basotho who has so far registered their names for assistance.

“The command centre, after consulting the cabinet, has resolved to set aside M4 mil-

lion from the COVID-19 relief fund to help Basotho who are stuck in South Africa during the lockdown,” Chief ‘Maseribane said.

“We have asked the representatives to register their names because that is the only way they can be assisted,” Chief ‘Maseribane said.

Chief ‘Maseribane also said the National Emergency Command Centre (NECC) would soon embark on a comprehensive screening and testing of COVID-19. He said priority will be given to people who work in South Africa so that they are ready to report back to work as soon as the country lifts its lockdown.

“The Ministry of Health will continue its comprehensive screening and testing of Basotho prioritising those working and studying in South Africa to ensure that they do not lose their jobs and places in schools once the lockdown is lifted.

“To date, there has been 28 suspected cases that have been tested and all have been found to be negative.

“Nonetheless, there has been thousands Basotho who came in the country, who have come through illegal crossings. Around 2987 people have been put under surveillance and observation to monitor if at all they will develop COVID-19 symptoms while in self-quarantine,” Chief ‘Maseribane said.



THESELE ‘Maseribane.

# Govt recruits 136 nurses for Covid-19 fight

Limpho Sello

**G**OVERNMENT has recruited 136 new nurses to boost its fight against the deadly coronavirus (Covid-19), the Health Ministry's Director of Nursing Services, Mpoetsi Makau (pictured) has said.

The nurses were recruited from those who have been trained in various institutions but were still unemployed. Ms Makau said the nurses were hired on a six months contract up to September 2020. M10 million has been set aside for their salaries.

Over the weekend, 94 out of the 136 nurses underwent a two-day training organised by the Nursing Directorate.

Ms Makau subsequently told the *Sunday Express* that the nurses would be deployed in all the country's 10 districts from May to September 2020 and their duties would include conducting surveillance, screening and testing for Covid-19.

"The (Health) ministry has set aside about M10 million to pay the salaries of the 136 new nurses," Ms

Makau said.

She said although the nurses' contracts expired in September 2020, it would be best for the government to assess the impact of Covid-19 at that time before deciding whether or not to let them go.

"Lesotho is yet to record any infections but if we were to record our first Covid-19 case in August then we would need to keep them in the system to help us fight the virus," Ms Makau said.

Newly recruited midwife Realebaha Macheli expressed gratitude for the job opportunity, saying he and fellow recruits would work tirelessly to beat the virus and other diseases.

"Now more than ever, it is not easy being a nurse when we are also not immune to the deadly virus. Ours is therefore a mission to go out and prioritise the prevention and control of Covid-19.

"We plead with the government to support us all the way and keep us motivated and equipped at all times. By so doing, many lives will be spared from the virus," Mr Macheli said.



# I don't want to be PM: Moleleki

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He said Mr Radebe had told them that Mr Thabane would issue a statement regarding his future after the South African envoy met Mr Thabane and other stakeholders. Mr Moleleki said he was not aware of what Mr Thabane's plans were and would only learn about them once they were revealed to the nation in his statement either today or tomorrow. (See on page 2).

"I request that you wait for that (Mr Thabane's) statement. I will be hearing the contents of that statement for the first time when it is published for the nation.

"That is all I can say," Mr Moleleki said.

Meanwhile, ABC chairperson Samuel Rapapa claims that Mr Radebe told the ABC's NEC that Mr Moleleki and his delegation had on Wednesday told South African President Cyril Ramaphosa that there was tension between the army and the police in Lesotho.

"He (Mr Radebe) told us that Moleleki led a delegation to South Africa on Wednesday and that the delegation told President Ramaphosa that there was looming instability in the country because of the tension between the army and the police.

"They (Radebe and team) told us there is a standoff between the army and the police. We recently saw the old man (Thabane) sowing divisions between them (army and police) by ordering armed soldiers to arrest the police commissioner (Holomo Molibeli)," Mr

Rapapa said.

He said the ABC's NEC told Mr Radebe that it was not aware of such tensions and that all it wanted was to see Mr Thabane leave office "as soon as possible".

Mr Rapapa said the NEC also told Mr Radebe that it had done everything Mr Thabane had requested of it as a precondition for his exit and it was time for him to keep his end of the deal by leaving immediately.

He said the premier asked them to choose his successor and they had complied by choosing Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro.

"He (Mr Thabane) said we must choose a successor and we did. He must go now. It is in his best interests to go because he is now being heckled in parliament and that is embarrassing," said Mr Rapapa.

He said the ABC's deal with the main opposition Democratic Congress (DC) to form a new government still stood.

"We are not backing down and it will be embarrassing for him to go the way (of a no confidence motion). It is in his best interests to leave today (Saturday) or tomorrow because we are going ahead with our plans (to oust him).

"They (South Africa) didn't ask us to halt our plans. They were just briefing us about the deteriorating relations between the army and the police which could affect the country's stability.

"The committee (ABC NEC) told them that Thabane must leave office now," Mr Rapapa

said.

Army commander Lieutenant General Moleleki Letsoela referred all questions about the alleged army-police tensions to the army's head of public relations, Brigadier Ntsele Ntoi.

Brigadier Ntoi's mobile phone rang unan-

swered yesterday.

Commissioner Molibeli denied the claims, saying, "there are no tensions between the army and the police. That is a pure lie".

Asked to react to allegations that there was a standoff between the army and the police last week which prompted Mr Radebe's weekend visit, Commissioner Molibeli said, "that was just propaganda and I know the names of the people that are peddling that propaganda". He however, refused to name them.





MONYANE Moleleki.

PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS


AGAINST

CORONAVIRUS  
(COVID-19)







BOPHELO



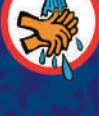
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AVOID CLOSE, PERSONAL CONTACT WITH ANYONE



WHEN COUGHING & SNEEZING, COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WITH A FLEXED ELBOW OR TISSUE & DISCARD TISSUE IMMEDIATELY & WASH YOUR HANDS



WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP & RUNNING WATER FOR 20 SECONDS

# Comment

## Brutality: Letsoela and Molibeli must now act

FOR the umpteenth time soldiers and police officers are being sued for torturing civilians and other acts of brutality. On numerous occasions on this page, we have pleaded with the army commander Lieutenant General Mojalefa Letsoela, and his police counterpart Commissioner Holomo Molibeli to rein in their subordinates. We have rightly praised the duo for instilling some semblance of professionalism in the army and police force since they took over in the aftermath of the advent of the Thomas Thabane-led four party coalition in 2017. While we have given credit where it was due, we are also duty bound to speak truth to power. Therefore, we will not stop pointing out and criticising the army and police chiefs for apparently turning a blind eye to the ever-growing list of excesses under their watch. As we report elsewhere in this edition, Lt-Gen Letsoela and Commissioner Molibeli have been sued by the Lesotho Lawyers for Human Rights (LLHR) for their apparent laxity which has allowed their subordinates to torture ordinary citizens at will. In his founding affidavit, LLHR president Advocate Zwelakhe Mda notes that although there is no law allowing it, army and police officers continue to violate the rights of citizens who allegedly flout the lockdown regulations requiring them to stay at home. The culture of human rights violations is so pervasive and extensive to the extent that the alleged violations are from virtually all of the country's 10 districts. It is very sad that the Thomas Thabane administration which began brightly is now being accused of the very excesses it promised to put an end to. It is equally sad that Mr Thabane himself is blamed for careless remarks at various forums calling on the police to "beat up thieves and crime suspects". As Adv Mda opines, such statements had an "enormous impact on the psyche of police who were already prone to such excesses".

This puts to shame the premier's own claims that he wanted to sack Commissioner Molibeli for failing to stop police brutality when he has never apologised or withdrawn his own statements inciting the police to violence against citizens. Sure, Commissioner Molibeli continues to bask in well-deserved glory after he spearheaded investigations and arrests of high-profile people suspected of involvement in equally high-profile crimes including First Lady Maesaiah Thabane. The top cop has been rightly praised for leaving no stone unturned to bring to book the alleged killers of Mr Thabane's ex-wife, Lipolelo Thabane, on 14 June 2017. His sterling work appears to have put him at odds with the premier who has unsuccessfully tried to out him on several occasions. His great work should however not be used to shield him from scrutiny with regards to his incompetence in other areas of policing. Regardless of Mr Thabane's motives in raising the issue now when he has been named as a suspect in his ex-wife's murder, the premier's claims that the top cop has dismally failed to deal with police brutality is valid. It may even be said that the most sordid case of brutality happened under Commissioner Molibeli's watch. This was when a suspect was tortured by police and forced to eat his own faeces in July 2019. To this day we have never heard what action was taken against the culprits if at all there was ever any such action.

This and other incidents will remain a huge stain on Commissioner Molibeli's reputation and legacy. The sooner he does something about it the better. Despite the high praises that he has received over his work in the Lipolelo murder, there is another school of thought that the police commissioner only acted against Mr Thabane to preempt the latter's decision to fire him as police commissioner. It is said Mr Molibeli only acted against Mr Thabane because he knew his letter of dismissal was on its way. Mr Molibeli would thus have to do a lot more to assuage that school of thought. Lt-Gen Letsoela had also done well to restore the tarnished image of the army after the excesses of the Tlali Kamoli era where civilians could even be shot and killed for driving and parking their cars in the vicinity of his home.

The affable Lt-Gen Letsoela even displayed unimaginable humility to apologise to the editor of this and the *Lesotho Times* for the harassment and intimidation of our Senior Reporter Pascalinah Kabi by senior army officers last year. This was in stark contrast to the Kamoli era when the then editor, Lloyd Mutungamiri, was shot by soldiers. The publisher, Basildon Peta and journalist Keiso Mohloboli were arrested and intimidated for simply doing their job to ensure the nation was well-informed on issues pertaining to the army. Lt-Gen Letsoela's humility won him admirers and suggested that positive winds of change were blowing in the army. The Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) appeared well on its way to becoming a truly people's army - a protector of citizens and not their tormentor as it had been before. But the army's behaviour during the ongoing lockdown suggests that there are some rogue elements who have learnt nothing and equally forgotten none of their previous excesses.

Lt-Gen Letsoela would do well to get rid of such elements. A lot of damage has been done but it is not too late for Lt-Gen Letsoela and Commissioner Molibeli to deal with the rogue elements. They must do so without further delay for the sake of the long-suffering citizens and for their own legacies.

We cannot go on like this.

# Sunday Express

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## Let's industrialise Africa so that we no longer need to ask for help

**A**FRICANS want to no longer be the world's whipping boy with a begging bowl, and to not have to cry out to the gods of other countries to provide our daily bread. This time, let the cry not be of pain, but let the cry be for leadership and for engagement, and agency for all. Our common future depends on this.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, African governments called on their multilateral and bilateral development partners, following the virtual meeting of ministers of finance on 19 March 2020.

They appealed for \$100-billion in immediate financial assistance to help African countries address the safety net needs of their populations, feed school-children and protect jobs. They called for additional resources of at least \$15-billion to support Africa's health systems.

They requested a debt standstill package for two years for all African countries, and they sought an increase in Special Drawing Rights Allocations (SDRs) to provide additional liquidity, particularly for the procurement of basic commodities, food and fuel.

In return, the leaders pledged to build and strengthen systems to fight corruption, and to enhance predictability, transparency and accountability of flows so finance ministers can plan effectively and civil society stakeholders can help track fund flows to ensure this reach those most in need expeditiously.

Subsequently, the African Union Chair, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, appointed four eminent Africans (Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Donald Kaberuka, Tidjane Thiam and Trevor Manuel), as African Union Special Envoys to lead the mobilisation of international support for Africa's efforts to address the health and economic fallout of the pandemic.

Three of these envoys were signatories to a 9 April 2020 opinion piece in Project Syndicate that argued Africa's urgent need for immediate support. Similarly, the recent World Bank's Africa's Pulse Report (Spring 2020), has called for additional financial assistance from Africa's bilateral and multilateral development partners, including a debt service standstill with official bilateral creditors.

The exceptional vulnerability of African countries is undeniable. For a majority of Africans, livelihoods remain very fragile. Sub-Saharan Africa has less than 15 percent of the global population, yet it accounts for more than half of the number of people globally who are below the poverty line of living on less than \$1.90 a day.

More than one third of employed workers in sub-Saharan Africa live in this condition of extreme poverty. Two thirds of the world's maternal deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. The proportion of people with access to safely managed sources of drinking water in sub-Saharan Africa is about 28 percent.

34 percent of sub-Saharan Africans live in slums or informal settlements, accounting for almost one quarter of the global slum population. At the best of times, their situation is precarious.

Even these dreary numbers hide the depth of misery and the existential fragility of the poor, and extremely poor African, and the feeling of hopelessness of millions of unemployed youth. Poverty

**John Ohiorhenuan**

and unemployment will increase with the Covid-19 crisis. This precarious situation, compounded by the pandemic, highlights the need for immediate attention in light of the greater health and food security imperatives brought on by Covid-19.

The response of African leaders to the crisis is eminently sensible. Africa needs help. However, it is impossible to ignore an agonising sense of déjà vu. A decade ago, in the context of the global financial and economic crisis, the same sorts of calls were made on behalf of the continent.

In a submission to the April 2009 G20 Summit, African leaders described the measures they were taking to mitigate the impacts of the crisis. They were providing fiscal stimulus packages, revising budget expenditures to target key sectors and strengthening banking regulation.

They argued that Africa simply did not have the ability to preserve the foundations of its growth over the next few years. They estimated that the continent would require an additional \$100-billion in the next two years just to maintain pre-crisis levels of growth.

Their plea, then as now, to the G20 leaders was to deliver on their previous commitments to increase aid to Africa and to unlock "new and additional resources", then in light of a global economic crisis, and now in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The deeper question here is how long can African leaders continue to ignore the structural roots of Africa's perpetual crisis? Neither the fiscal and monetary policy measures taken in 2008-2009 to mitigate the impacts of the financial crisis, nor current emergency strengthening of Africa's health systems and expanding safety nets, go to the root question of structural change and economic diversification.

This crisis should ensure that African countries focus on the question of what needs to be done to avoid carrying a begging bowl each time there is an exogenous shock, or because of weak progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which is true at the best of times. Let us begin with the low hanging fruit.

All African leaders are committed to the elimination of corruption. This crisis is the moment to intensify efforts to eliminate waste, theft, and inefficiencies from governance and procurement systems and to install anti-corruption systems and mechanisms that may have been thwarted in the past by powerful interests.

This crisis should be an occasion to embrace the imperative of speedy implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area strategy. Africans know that Africa is not one country. Africa is 55 sovereign states, but many are small economies in global terms, even recognising the three largest economies of Nigeria, South Africa and Angola.

Harnessing economies of scale, and the scalability of new technologies, is an obvious policy imperative for our small economies. The pandemic highlights the urgency of local production of medical supplies and equipment, and indeed the

urgency of local resilience.

The Covid-19 pandemic will not be the last global disease outbreak, or the only thing to disrupt global supply lines. The SDGs require local resilience.

The importance of responding to this crisis at the level of production reforms merely tells us that we can no longer avoid the vigorous management of Africa's position in the international economic system. We must confront the fact that our problem lies in the absence of an organic link between our pattern of domestic resource use and our pattern of domestic demand.

Many Africans of my generation will recall the plea, in our glory days in the Seventies, to match our production and our resource use to the basic needs of people and build up our nascent industries to reduce our extreme dependence on imports for everything.

Unfortunately, we have allowed a select few to benefit from the exploitation of its natural resources with the result of widespread poverty and extreme import dependence. Africa has taken the wrong lessons from the economists' theory of comparative advantage.

African leaders need to engage the African people, and give them agency, in the search for structural solutions. To break out of Africa's poverty trap requires that African leaders recognise, as eminent leaders from Fernando Cardoso to Nelson Mandela recognised, that in today's world, the legitimacy of the leader derives neither from divine authority or from tradition, nor from the fact of having been elected. Legitimacy derives from the fulfilment of a social contract, from the delivery of what an engaged citizenry wants.

Africans want to no longer be the world's whipping boy with a begging bowl, and to not have to cry out to the gods of other countries to provide our daily bread. This time let the cry not be of pain, but let the cry be for leadership and for engagement and agency for all. Our common future depends on this. — BM

• **John Ohiorhenuan is a development economist, a former director at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York, and one-time head of the UN in South Africa.**

## Words of Wisdom



*THE masses of the people of Africa are crying for unity. — Kwame Nkruma*

# Is Covid-19 in danger of killing electoral democracy in Southern Africa?

Arnold Tsunga, Tatenda Mazarura and Mark Heywood

**T**HIS week we examine how southern African countries are responding to the dual paradoxical objectives of ensuring that measures to protect people from Covid-19 do not negatively affect human rights and the strengthening of democracy.

The number of Covid-19 cases continues to grow in southern Africa, threatening scheduled elections and democratic processes.

However, in the words of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, on 27 April, emergency powers invoked to fight Covid-19 “should not be a weapon governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population, and even perpetuate their time in power”.

As a recent article in *Maverick Citizen* explains, the UN has reiterated time and time again that respect for all human rights — economic, social, civil and political — is fundamental to the success of the fight against Covid-19.

Nonetheless, the chorus of complaints about how Covid-19 measures are deliberately being made repressive by some governments in southern Africa — to produce political outcomes as opposed to public health outcomes — is increasing in volume.

With Covid-19 hanging over their heads, African governments are faced with a difficult choice: to go ahead with scheduled elections and risk accelerating infections or to postpone and compromise their democracy, including by creating potential leadership legitimacy crises.

Some countries, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, have already suspended political activity and elections due to fears of spreading the virus.

Others like Malawi and Zambia appear to be proceeding with elections as planned or as ordered by the court while implementing measures that have the effect of limiting the enjoyment of fundamental rights in a way that affects the potential freeness and fairness of the polls.

Concerns about preparedness from election authorities and political parties have also been considered.

The African Union’s governance instruments affirm that “regular elections constitute a key element of the democratisation process and, therefore, are essential ingredients for good governance, the rule of law, the maintenance and promotion of peace, security, stability and development”.

It is therefore important to prevent Covid-19 from not just killing people but also from killing electoral democracy.

On 19 March, South Africa’s Electoral Court granted an urgent application by the Electoral Commission to postpone all municipal by-elections and associated voter registration activities that were originally scheduled for March-May 2020.

On 26 March, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission announced that all by-elections and other electoral activities had been suspended until further notice as part of precautionary measures to protect its employees and the general public from the pandemic.



adequate logistical preparation for the election in important key result areas would be difficult within the timeframe.

These include procurement of voting materials, recruitment and training of election officials and enabling administrative processes such as voter registration and setting up of election management infrastructure in constituencies.

Voting procedures would have to be adjusted to comply with lockdown regulations.

Altogether it is a mammoth logistical undertaking that requires additional resources, both material and financial, that Malawi does not have. As political analyst Taona Mwanyisa argues, if Malawi goes ahead with the election amid the pandemic there will be serious hurdles to overcome.

The opposition has expressed the worry that President Peter Mutharika is going to use the pandemic to delay the election and cling on to power.

Malawi is in a difficult situation because the election dates are part of a court order. Any postponement could have far-reaching implications on the health of democracy at a time when there are already significant questions about the legitimacy of Mutharika remaining in power when his term expired.

He has remained in office merely because of technical aspects of the law that will not allow a vacuum at State House. Questions have been raised about the extent of his powers, given that he is in office but unelected.

The AU governance instruments are clear that “democratic elections are the basis of the authority of any representative government”.

Such is the extent of the impact of Covid-19 on electoral contestation in Malawi that efforts by Mutharika’s government to impose lockdown conditions have been widely rejected by the population, resulting in protests and court challenges.

Law enforcement agencies have threatened to use force to ensure compliance with lockdown.

### Threats in 2021

Southern African elections scheduled for next year could also be affected.

Information on whether Zambia will proceed with its 2021 poll remains sketchy. The country is set to conduct its first ever-electronic population census in August this year. But even that has not been officially announced.

Ominous signs that authorities in Zambia are using Covid-19 measures to clamp down on enjoyment of fundamental rights are showing. There have been several reports of police brutality to enforce regulations.

The Minister for Lusaka threatened to whip the spokesperson of the Human Rights Commission after he condemned police for whipping people for allegedly violating rules.

Leading lawyer John Sangwa has been disbarred administratively from practicing for opposing a parliamentary Bill centralising executive power and removing effective separation of powers.

Independent television station Prime Television has been forcibly closed under the guise of protecting public interest and public safety. Restrictions to civic space — oxygen for citizen voices — prevent activists from drawing attention to human rights emergencies and risk creating a wider human rights crisis.

That, after all, is the lesson of China’s suppression of doctors who tried to warn about Covid-19 in early January.

Allegations of weaponisation of the law to restrict civic space and attack human rights activists and institutions — often described as “judicial persecution” or “persecution through prosecution” — keep arising in Zambia.

In Lesotho, where embattled Prime Minister Thomas Thabane is under pressure to resign, fresh elections can happen at any time.

Police Commissioner Holomo Molibeli has raised serious allegations that there were plans to have

him killed but was “a free man only because Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander Lieutenant General Mojalefa Letsoela defied orders to arrest him” during the army’s deployment by the prime minister on Saturday 25 April.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) raises concern that, while there may be broad political consensus regarding the postponement of elections, the legal basis for such postponement and the modality of governance between the end of term of the current parliament and new elections have raised political and constitutional contestations.

Many constitutions are silent on what should happen if elections fail to take place for one reason or another.

Notwithstanding the devastating effects of Covid-19, the pandemic presents an opportunity for election authorities and legislators in southern Africa to better organise themselves and put in place measures and plan Bs that ensure their citizens are able to exercise their franchise to vote at any given time.

We therefore agree with Thomas White that “while these measures may mitigate the spread of coronavirus in the short term, they do create another risk that Covid-19 will be used as a smokescreen to rationalise attacks on democracy”.

### Status of lockdowns in southern Africa

Southern African countries have continued operating under lockdown conditions with minimum or no cross-border travel.

As South Africa entered its final week of a 35-day lockdown, the government announced it would gradually ease the restrictions in five stages from 30 April, citing economic concerns.

President Cyril Ramaphosa authorised the deployment of an additional 73,180 soldiers to help police enforce lockdown regulations until June, raising concerns in civil society about possible abuses, some call-

ing it “a strategic blunder against an invincible enemy”.

Zimbabwe and Namibia have also remained under strict lockdowns that are scheduled to end on 3 and 4 May respectively. On 21 April, Lesotho extended a 21-day national lockdown by another 14 days despite not having recorded any cases.

On 22 April, Eswatini reversed a decision to relax coronavirus restrictions after infections almost doubled to 31 in one week.

During April, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the World Health Organisation director general, laid out six criteria that should guide countries as they consider lifting restrictions.

These include but are not limited to ensuring that transmission is controlled, health systems capacities are in place to test, isolate, treat every case and trace every contact, and that communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the new norm.

### Lockdowns and police brutality

Civil society continues recording cases of torture, arbitrary arrest and murder of citizens by law enforcement agencies in all countries.

Police and soldiers in South Africa are accused of assaulting people they allege were breaching lockdown regulations. In one incident, riot police went as far as to fire rubber bullets at nurses protesting shortages in personal protective equipment.

To date, reports indicate that eight people have been killed by law enforcement officers and at least 200 cases of police brutality have been recorded.

In Eswatini, the police commissioner warned journalists against writing “negative news” about the kingdom. The warning comes in the wake of the detention of former *Times of Eswatini* journalist Eugene Dube.

# Relief for vulnerable households

Bataung Moeketsi

At least 150 vulnerable families in and around Maseru recently received donations from different well-wishers to cushion them from the hardships brought on by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Although Lesotho is yet to record any infections, it has however, not been spared the effects of the deadly virus which has seen most businesses shut down and people required to stay at home to prevent the spread of the disease.

Many people rely on the informal sector for their income, selling vegetables and other wares. But these businesses have been forced to close during the nationwide lockdown from 30 March to 5 May 2020.

Moved by the plight of vulnerable families, a Maseru-based church, White as Snow Fire Ministries (WASFM) yesterday donated food parcels to 72 households in the Ha-Matala suburb. Each food parcel consisted of a tray of eggs, cooking oil, maize meal, soya mince, tinned fish and spinach.

WASFM's founder, Apostle Anthony Omelebele Snow told the *Sunday Express* that the initiative was borne out of a vision where God told him to feed 50 people.

He said after consultations with Ha-Matala's Chief 'Mamatala Matala, they identified 60 needy families.

In the end 72 families benefited from the donations after a member of the church, Lehlohonolo Motlale, donated to another 12 households. The 15-year-old Lehlohonolo also pledged an additional M600 to help the needy.

Speaking at the handover of the goods, Apostle Snow implored churches to go beyond just preaching to the needy but to give generously because "the act of love is in giving".

"The vision God gave to this ministry is to reconcile man with God through giving because if I come and say "God bless you" and you are hungry, it will not remove you from crime.

"The little we provide to the vulnerable can steer people away from making bad decisions and whenever you remember God loves you, you will remember the little you were given," he said.



LEHLOHONOLO Motlale.

On his part, Lehlohonolo said, "during this pandemic, I encourage people to donate as much as they can because people are hungry and need supplies".

One of the beneficiaries, 59-year-old Mokheseng Mohokae, told this publication he was grateful for the food hamper. He added that "God has used the people of this church (WASFM) to help those who cannot help themselves".

On Friday, Chief Seeiso Leshoboro Majara of Marabeng donated

groceries to 28 families in his area.

The groceries were sourced from well-wishers including Berea #6 Councillor Motlatsi Maqelebo, Caesar's Travel and Tours, and Kiddy Care Academy founder John Sylvester Amoako.

Each hamper consisted of flour, cooking oil, beans, peas, matches, candles, salt, tea and soap.

"Everyone who I approached understood the need to help the vulnerable families especially during this time when we are dealing with



ANTHONY Omelebele Snow.

the COVID-19 pandemic that has put so many jobs at risk and increased food insecurity," Chief Majara said.

Hillsview resident Tebogo Matji-Abbey and her friends also sourced and donated groceries to 50 families in different parts of Maseru.

Ms Matji-Abbey said the donations were sourced from various well-wishers including insurance giant Metropolitan who contributed M32 000.

Cosmetics manufacturer Makhaleleng donated two containers of pe-

roleum jelly to each household.

Each hamper consisted of maize meal, flour, sugar, beans, tea, candles, matches, soap, two trays of eggs, cooking oil, soya mince, tinned fish and petroleum jelly.

"We realised that if we, as Basotho, don't come together and share the little we have, people are literally going to die of hunger and not Coronavirus.

"We hope that people in different districts will also donate in their areas," Ms Matji-Abbey said.

## Is Covid-19 in danger of killing electoral democracy in Southern Africa?

...From page 7

The Economic Freedom Fighters of Swaziland issued a statement strongly condemning "the psychological warfare, abuse of power and demonising and torture of innocent journalists and its members by the police".

In Zimbabwe, Lovemore Zvokusekwa was arrested for allegedly originating a statement that brought the president into "disrepute". There was general outrage when police in Mutare arrested an opposition member of parliament, Regai Tsunga, on 21 April for distributing food as part of measures to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 measures on poor people facing starvation.

Ruling party MPs have not faced a similar fate for doing the same thing. To date, reports indicate that there have been 190 assaults by the police, 12 attacks on journalists, 7,000 arrests — mainly people moving around in search of food — and one case of malicious damage to property.

### Lockdowns and poverty

Severe hunger continues to threaten southern Africa's efforts to enforce lockdowns. In its annual Global Report on Food Crises, released on 21 April, the UN World Food Program reported "the number of people battling acute hunger is on the rise again". Although research for the publication was conducted before the coronavirus outbreak,

the WFP supposes the pandemic "may push even more families and communities into deeper distress".

On 24 April, a Zimbabwean man was arrested and charged with undermining the authority of President Emmerson Mnangagwa by allegedly circulating a message on social media accusing the country's leader of ineptitude for not implementing a rescue package like that of his South African counterpart.

Malawi's lockdown remains suspended until the government puts in place necessary socio-economic protection measures as ordered by the High Court. Authorities must strike a balance between enforcing compliance and ensuring respect for fundamental human rights.

The government of South Africa has led the way in this. It allocated R500-billion towards relieving the plight of those most affected by the pandemic.

### Access to water

The absence of clean and potable water, a key element in fighting the spread of Covid-19, remains a huge challenge in the region.

On 21 April, Community Water Alliance, a Zimbabwean civil society organisation, condemned the Zimbabwe Republic Police for arresting one of its staff members whilst she was on her way to help raise funds for sanitisers and public water points — even though she was in possession of a letter from the City

of Harare giving her permission to do so.

South Africa should be applauded for availing R20-billion to municipalities tasked with provision of emergency water supply, increased sanitation of public transport and facilities, and providing food and shelter for the homeless.

### Covid-19 testing, treatment and vaccination

Health experts have expressed worry over a significant rise in reported Covid-19 cases in Africa. This has prompted most governments to ramp up tests in addition to lockdowns.

South Africa has conducted more than 161,000 tests after rolling out a mass testing exercise earlier in April.

On 14 April, the UN's resident co-ordinator in Angola announced an additional grant of \$12.5-million to combat Covid-19.

The WHO issued a warning that "there is currently no evidence that people who have recovered from Covid-19 and have antibodies are protected from a second infection".

This was after some governments were considering issuing "immunity passports" or "risk-free certificates" that would enable individuals to travel or to return to work assuming that they are protected against re-infection.

### Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastat-

ing impact on two fronts: health and economy. With the exception of South Africa, the lack of government support for most citizens in the region has been exacerbated by the excessive use of force by authorities in the name of enforcing lockdowns.

Denied the right to food, water and other basics, democracy is likely to be the next casualty for citizens as other important events such as elections have been caught in the Covid-19 crosshairs.

Whilst it can be argued that the postponement of these processes is important to constrain the spread of the virus, the implications are very worrisome.

Measures ought to be taken to ensure that the interests of human rights and democracy are not unnecessarily sacrificed on the altar of the health emergency.

Southern African democracies are fragile and, in enforcing lockdowns and restrictions, authorities are urged to exercise restraint to limit further regression during this tremendous stress test. — *Daily Maverick*

**Arnold Tsunga** is a human rights lawyer, the director of the Africa Regional Programme of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and the immediate past-chairperson of the SAHRDN. **Tatenda Mazarura** is a Woman Human Rights Defender (WHRD), a professional rapporteur and an election expert. **Mark Heywood** is editor of *Maverick Citizen*.



Xpress

# People

May 3 - 9 2020

# Tšepiso Mahase speaks on film career



Trevor Noah to pay salaries of 'Daily Show' crew  
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Bataung Moeketsi

**F**ILMMAKER Tšepiso Mahase says she probably would be jobless and sitting at home had she not chosen to study film.

So deep is her passion for film that she would rather be jobless than work in any other field.

It is this same passion that led the 28-year-old into ditching her Media Studies and Journalism studies at the University of the Free State after just two years in 2010 to follow her passion.

Two years later she moved to Cape Town and enrolled at AFDA film school where she spent another two years. She later moved to City Varsity for one year where she attained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Film and TV Production in 2015.

Born in Roma, Mahase spent her early childhood in Thaba Nchu, in the Free State province.

In a recent interview with the *Xpress People*, Mahase said her curiosity about filmmaking started while she was in high school.

"I had started watching films seriously when I was in Grade 6 and as soon as I could make my way around town by myself, I began

renting lots of DVDs," Mahase said.

"I became fascinated by the behind the scenes clips at the end of some movies. I would watch them and think how interesting the filmmaking process must be although I never imagined doing."

"I only became curious about filmmaking late in high school."

However, she found herself in journalism school after high school. But realising that she had taken a path that had little joy for her, she quickly moved into film school.

Now based in Morija, Mahase now works for The Hub, a creative technology lab as a script supervisor and says she is happy to express herself as a filmmaker.

"There's so much to do in film and looking at a credit roll is pretty much looking at the different several career options within film."

Mahase boasts of a film catalog that includes her debut production, a short-film titled GRAPEFUIT. She is also behind *Roses for the Ocean*, *Pigs Hear Me Cry* and *Moth* (all in 2019), all of which she wrote, directed and produced.

In 2018 GRAPEFUIT was screened at the Schnit Film Festival in Cape Town, Lesotho Film Festival and Buka Arts Short Film Night

in Johannesburg.

It was also tested at the Black Femme Supremacy Festival in the United States of America that same year.

Last year *Roses for the Ocean* was screened at the Schnit Film Festival, Lesotho Film Festival, Hazel Eye Film Festival (Cape Town) and Kasi Vibe Film Festival (Johannesburg).

Mahase says both films are "licensed to stream on the soon to be launched MTN and Vodacom South Africa's streaming platforms."

Among the many challenges that she has faced, Mahase says funding and chauvinism are the critical ones. She however, says she is "fortunate to have employers who support me by not letting my gender define my work".

She said she is currently working on her next project, another short-film while she expects to release three more films this year.

She also hopes to direct a feature film in the near future as she has set her eyes onto the international scene while also exposing Lesotho's film sector.

"I want my films to reach major international film festivals and I'll solely be focusing on making films. I hope to get some Basotho filmmakers together to appreciate the art that is cinema," Mahase said.

# The Fergusons deny firing Dineo

**F**ERGUSON Films, which is owned by Shona and Connie Ferguson, has hit back at claims that Dineo Langa was fired from *The Queen*.

This comes after *Sunday World* reported that Dineo was fired when she asked for time off to shoot a film.

The Sunday newspaper said the actress, who has been with the *Mzansi Magic* soapie since its inception four years ago, was allegedly sent a letter by Ferguson Films informing her that she should not bother to report for duty after the lockdown. "She is distraught. She thought the Fergusons are family".

The publication also reported that Cindy Mahlangu, who plays the character of Siyanda, and Zenande Mfenyana, who plays Goodness Mabuza, are also on their way out for various reasons.

The Fergusons released a memo that asked actors if they could work for free as part of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Responding to questions sent by *IOL Entertainment*, Lauren Nell, a showrunner at Ferguson Films, said that Dineo's contract was not terminated.

"Dineo's contract was not terminated. She is still on payroll until the end of May. Dineo was released to go and shoot her movie. Scripts had to be rewritten to accommodate this as she was on an 'A' storyline.

"She was scheduled to return in April, but due to the lockdown, everything has changed.

"All cast and crew contracts end at the end of May", she said.

Nell also said Mfenyana was shooting with *The Queen* before lockdown but had decided to take some time off work until further notice "due to personal reasons".

The actress is rumoured to be pregnant, with eagle eyed fans of the show taking to social media, speculating whether she is with child or not.

Earlier this year Rami Chuene was axed from the show. — IOL



TREVOR Noah.

## Trevor Noah to pay salaries of 'Daily Show' crew

**S**OUTH African comedian Trevor Noah seems to be going beyond the call of duty. Just this week, the *Daily Show* host gave away 50 laptops to teachers who are giving online lessons from home.

Now the *Son of Patricia* star has gone even further. According to reports, Noah is personally paying the salaries of 25 furloughed members of *The Daily Show* crew who were forced to stay home amid the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The virus caused an industry-wide shutdown, affecting talk shows like *The Ellen De-*

*Generes Show* and *The Daily Show*.

*Variety* reported that Noah informed crew members that he would continue paying their salaries until production starts up again.

"These are the people who have been on the show with Trevor from day one and help him put on the show," a source close to the production told the publication.

"Trevor is personally covering their salaries until the production business opens again. He respects his crew tremendously and feels it's only right that they get through this together."

Like other shows, production on *The Daily Show* was halted last month with Noah hosting a remote version from his home, now called *The Daily Social Distancing Show with Trevor Noah*.

Comedy Central also announced that it would expand the remote version of the show to 45-minutes a night — the first time in the franchise's history.

Good news for Noah, considering the show now sits at the No. 1 spot in late night viewing, thanks to his interview with Dr Anthony Fauci which ranked up more than 43 million views. — IOL



DINEO Langa.



**Weekend  
Girl**

**THANDEKA Matshikiza** is a 22-year-old Honours degree student at Rhodes University who resides in Thetsane West, Maseru. She aspires to become a forensic psychologist. Her motto is derived from William Shakespeare: "It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves".

# Yourstars

## Aries - March 21 - April 20

YOUR personal life is going through a state of confusion. You can help them with difficult projects. An older member of the family may need assistance. Your hard work and dedication will pay off, so stick to your guns and do your job well.

Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

## Taurus - April 21 - May 20

Stress coupled with diet will add to stomach problems. I Don't let siblings put pressure on you. Opportunities for travel and communication are evident. Get ready to do some fancy footwork when it comes to taking care of your financial situation.

Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

## Gemini - May 21 - June 21

Time spent with family, children, or good friends will be regenerating and positive. You might want to spend some time by yourself in order to decide exactly how you feel. You are best to stick to basics. Work on getting ahead by picking up added skills. You should be in business for yourself.

Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

## Cancer - June 22 - July 22

A series of misunderstandings may be at fault. This might not be a day for hasty decisions. If you can get away for a vacation, do so. Travel and creative hobbies will be your best outlet.

Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

## Leo - July 23 - August 22

You will have some problems with children, but if you are patient you will win their favour. Your self esteem will benefit. Friends will be loyal and caring. Deceit around you is evident. Take positive action.

Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

## Virgo - August 23 - September 22

Upheavals may occupy your day. You will get out of shape easily if you don't keep on top of things. Don't think the worst if you hear something negative about your partner. Elders may get you going this week.

Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

## Libra - September 23 - October 22

Rely on the one you love for support and affection. This will not be the best day to make changes or renovations to your residence. You will have splendid suggestions for fund raising events. You will find the perfect outfit if you shop this week.

Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

## Scorpio - October 23 - November 21

Don't let your emotional upset interfere with your professional objectives. Take time to explain your intentions to loved ones. Tone down and put some of that hard-earned cash into a safe, long-term investment. Your emotions have been pulled out of shape and you need to do a little backtracking.

Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

## Sagittarius - November 22 - December 20

This is a great day to spend with family. Don't be shy to promote your own interests. Business partnerships should turn out to be quite lucrative. Real estate investments will pay off.

Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

## Capricorn - December 21 - January 19

Someone around you may not be trustworthy. Empty promises are evident. You may have a problem keeping secrets. Anger may cause you grief; control your temper and try to sit back and calm down.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Aquarius - January 20 - February 18

Good friends will give you honest answers. Be sure you get accurate information. Social evenings at your place will be highly successful. If you've been under stress and worrying about older members of the family, it's time to come to terms with the situation.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

## Pisces - February 19 - March 20

Be prudent and don't be led down the garden path. You will find travel and lectures most stimulating. Don't gamble unless you can afford to lose. You will be able to get to the bottom of things this week.

Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

# The horrifying story of Colleen Stan — The girl in the box



COLLEEN Stan before her abduction in 1977.



COLLEEN Stan.

**N**OW known as “the girl in the box,” Colleen Stan’s choice to hitchhike led to seven years of excruciating captivity.

In 1977, 20-year-old Colleen Stan was hitchhiking from her hometown of Eugene, Oregon to northern California. She considered herself an expert hitchhiker and on that day in May, she had already turned down two rides.

However, when a blue van pulled over in Red Bluff, California, Stan saw that it was being driven by a man who had his wife in the passenger seat and a baby in the backseat. Deeming the young couple and their child a safe family, Stan accepted the ride.

Sadly, she didn’t know what she was in for. This family was anything but safe.

### The kidnapping of Colleen Stan

The man was 23-year-old Cameron Hooker and his wife was 19-year-old Janice Hooker. As it turned out, they had been actively looking for a hitchhiker to kidnap. Cameron, a lumber mill worker, had intense bondage fantasies. Until they captured Stan, he had been using his wife Janice to fulfill these fantasies.

Shortly after Stan got into the van, Cameron veered off the road and into a remote area. That’s when he held a knife to her neck and forced her into a ‘head box’ that weighed 20 pounds. The box, which only confined her head, blocked out sound and light around her and prevented the flow of fresh air.

The car eventually drove to a house where Stan was led downstairs to a cellar and subjected to horrifying forms of torture. She was tied to the ceiling by her wrists and then beaten, electrocuted, whipped, and burned.

Initially, the demented couple had an agreement that concluded Cameron wasn’t allowed to engage in sexual activity with Stan. Instead, she was forced to watch the couple have sex after they abused her. Later on, this agreement would change, and Cameron started incorporating rape into his forms of torture.

### “The girl in the box”

When the family moved to a mobile home, Colleen Stan was kept in a coffin-

## Stranger than Fiction

like wooden box underneath the Hookers’ bed for up to 23 hours a day (hence Stan now being known as “the girl in the box”). The couple had two young daughters who didn’t realise Stan was being kept against her will and didn’t even know that she was living in the house. For an hour or two a day, “the girl in the box” would clean and babysit the children.

“Anytime I was taken out of the box, I never knew what to expect. Fear of the unknown was always with me as I was kept in the dark both physically and mentally,” said Stan.

Although she was subjected to regular beatings and rape, Stan didn’t consider her torture to be the worst aspect of her confinement. What terrified her even more was Cameron’s claim that he was a member of a satanic organisation called the “The Company.”

She was told that The Company was a powerful organisation who watched over her and had her family’s home bugged.

More than anything, Stan feared an escape attempt would cause The Company to harm her family. So “the girl in the box” remained in captivity, and even signed a contract stating that she was their slave.

By complying with Cameron and his wishes, Stan continuously earned more and more freedom. She was allowed to work in the garden and go for jogs. She was even allowed to visit her family; Cameron accompanied her and she said he was her boyfriend.

Her family took a happy-looking photograph of the pair, but her lack of communication and money made them believe she was in a cult. However, they didn’t want to pressure her as they were scared it would cause her to disappear for good.

Stan’s fear of The Company stopped her from escaping or revealing any information to her family.

Colleen Stan was kept captive for seven years from 1977 to 1984. Towards the end of that seven-year span, Cameron stated that he wanted Stan as a second wife. This didn’t bode well for Janice Hooker.

Janice had confessed that Cameron tortured and brainwashed her since they first starting dating each other and that she had developed denial techniques and compartmentalised that aspect of her life.

After this turning point, Janice revealed to Stan that Cameron was not part of The Company and helped her to escape. In the beginning, Janice asked Stan not to say anything, convinced that her husband could be rehabilitated. When she realised he was unsavable, Janice reported her husband to the police.

Colleen Stan Escapes

Cameron Hooker was charged with sexual assault and kidnapping using a knife. At the trial, Janice testified against him for full immunity. Colleen Stan’s experience was described as “unparalleled in FBI history.”

Cameron Hooker was found guilty and given consecutive terms, totalling a 104-year sentence. In 2015, he was denied parole. It will be a minimum of 15 more years before he’s eligible for parole again.

Colleen Stan suffered chronic back and shoulder pain as a result of her confinement. When she returned home, she received extensive therapy, eventually marrying and having a daughter of her own. She joined an organisation committed to helping abused women and earned a degree in accounting.

Colleen Stan and Janice Hooker both changed their names and continued to reside in California. However, they do not communicate with one another.

In regards to her resilience during those excruciating years in captivity, Stan told reporters, “I learned I could go anywhere in my mind.” In a similar vein to Janice’s compartmentalisation, Stan said, “You just remove yourself from the real situation going on and you go somewhere else.”

A television film of Stan’s story called *The girl in the box* was made in 2016. — allthatsinteresting.com



CADDIES collect food parcels donated by Maseru Golf Members on Wednesday.



MASERU Golf Club members donate paraffin to caddies.



CHINESE Ambassador to Lesotho Lei Kezhong (left) chats with Deputy Health Minister 'Manthabiseng Phohleli at the Chinese Embassy on Monday.



DEPUTY Health Minister 'Manthabiseng Phohleli (left) and Director General for Health Services 'Nyane Letsie follow proceedings at a China-Africa video teleconference on combating COVID-19 at the Chinese Embassy in Maseru.



SOUTH Africa's Deputy State Security Minister Zizi Kodwa (left) chats with President Cyril Ramaphosa's Special Envoy to Lesotho Jeff Radebe at a press briefing at the SA High

# Weary Moroccan medics fight virus, nightmares and tears

**R**ABAT, Morocco — When Moroccan nurse Mofadal Ahyane lost his first patient to COVID-19, he had a recurring nightmare: His patient in agony slips from his body, which gradually transforms into Ahyane's own father, then brother, then friend.

"The death of that man will never leave me as long as I live," Ahyane said, his voice cracking as he recalled the vain efforts of doctors and nurses at the hospital in the northern city of Tetouan to save the man's life.

The virus has upended life for Morocco's medical workers. They enjoy better medical facilities than in much of Africa but are often short of the equipment available in European hospitals, which also found themselves overwhelmed.

Medical professionals around this Muslim kingdom in North Africa spoke to The Associated Press, showing that the heartbreak and fears and the challenges of working safely are shared with Western counterparts, as is the devotion to saving lives.

Two Moroccan doctors have died after becoming infected, officials have said. Morocco, which is under a strict lockdown, currently has more than 4 500 confirmed cases and some 170 deaths, according to a Johns Hopkins University count.

Since early March, the Moroccan government has steadily introduced virus control measures that have gradually turned vibrant cities into near ghost towns. Health minister Khalid Ait Boutaleb says that if it weren't for preventive measures, Morocco would now be facing 6,000 coronavirus-related deaths.

Still, the virus has wrought personal havoc for some health workers, temporarily tearing them apart their families as they self-isolate at the end of the day to keep their loved ones safe.

Radiology nurse Iman Benali at Casablanca's Sidi Moumen Hospital has been away from her husband and 6-year-old child since early March. Some nurses working with Benali had to stop breastfeeding their infants when duty called, she



HEALTHCARE workers assist each other inside one of the COVID-19 intensive care units (ICU) of the Moulay Abdellah hospital in Sale, Morocco.

said.

Her long days end in self-isolation at a hotel with 70 other medical professionals. The hotel housekeepers are also forced to exchange families for hotel rooms because of their contact with the health professionals. Benali said the sacrifices shared with co-workers has created a special bond.

"We watch out for each other out of compassion, but also out of fear for our own health," she said. "If a

hospital worker gets contaminated, it means the entire hospital workforce may be contaminated."

At Moulay Abdellah Hospital in Morocco's Atlantic coastal city of Sale, Dr Youssef Dhabbi said he believes the deaths of his colleagues are a driving force for caregivers.

"If the deceased doctors were given a chance to return to work, they would take it instantly. You'd find them in their protective gear, treating patients," he said.

During his 12-hour shift, nurse Ahyane rarely eats because he fears contamination. "You wonder, are your hands clean enough to eat?" he says.

Dr Houcine Benazouz doesn't even consider eating. Since early March, he has been running between departments at the Tetouan hospital. At night, he stays in a white, impersonal hotel room far from the comfort of his loved ones.

"It has to be the hardest choice

I made, leaving my wife and children behind me," he said.

Nabil Zouini, who works with a testing task force in his hometown of Meknes, hasn't been home in over a month, something his 3-year-old daughter can't understand.

"She smiles at me every night and asks me: 'Dad, are you coming back home tomorrow?'" Zouini said of his video chats with his child. "If I say no, she cries."

Zouini dons a new mask and gown at every encounter with suspected cases, but he is never certain he's safe.

"The hardest part is taking the gown off. We have to do it in a way that we don't touch the outside of the suit, which is fully contaminated. We can only take off the suit from the inside out." He removes gowns at least 10 times a day.

It's now beginning to feel like the ancient ramparts of Meknes are closing in.

"The psychological turmoil is incredibly hard," he said. "Many of us will be scarred by what we see."

Zouini described an eerie emptiness in the streets of his city, an image that collides with the once-lively ambiance of Meknes, which in normal times draws tourists from around the world.

"As I drive to homes of suspected cases, my eyes flash for a second and I see the cafés, the playgrounds buzzing with life ... before I'm brought back to reality," he said.

Using a typical Moroccan expression that may speak to all the country's health workers, Zouini added: "I say to myself, we can't meet each other today, but we will hug tomorrow." — AP

## Curfew concern: Are the soldiers going to shoot civilians?

Greg Nicolson

**I**T'S unlikely the military was sufficiently trained to take on a law enforcement role during the lockdown and cases of abuse could rise as the curfew begins.

The rapid deployment of the SANDF to support the fight against the spread of Covid-19 means it's unlikely members received sufficient training to support the police in enforcing lockdown regulations, said Dr Johan Burger from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) on Thursday 30 April.

The military isn't trained or equipped to take on policing functions and there had been no mention of providing further training to members before they were sent into communities, which could undermine the aim of the operation, said Burger during an ISS webinar.

In the country's largest military deployment in the democratic era, more than 75,000 members of the SANDF are available to help the SAPS enforce lockdown regulations, support the public health system, upgrade infrastructure and provide logistical support to the government's efforts to combat the spread of coronavirus.

Burger said the speed of the deployment and reports of misconduct by SANDF members "makes it very difficult to believe that sufficient training was provided to all of the security personnel in relation to how the regulations should be enforced".

"During the current crisis, the biggest challenge is the law enforcement role of the military," he added.

Retired Colonel David Peddle, former chief of SANDF Joint Operations and an adviser on crowd control policies, summed up the public's concerns: "It's primarily whether or not the army is going to shoot people or not."

The military ombudsman has received 20 complaints from members of the public



MEMBERS of the SANDF patrol the streets in Johannesburg.

against SANDF members during the lockdown. Another 13 have been filed by SANDF members about their working conditions.

The United Nations listed South Africa as one of 15 countries where allegations of abuse by the authorities during the response to Covid-19 were concerning.

The Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) has not provided an update on the number of complaints filed against SANDF members since the early weeks of the lockdown, but at least 21 cases have been lodged and there will likely be more amidst rife allegations of arbitrary arrests.

Burger and Peddle said the SANDF is often reluctant to operate domestically, but the military have been deployed in recent years to patrol the border, curb xenophobic attacks and respond to crime on the Cape Flats.

"A law enforcement or policing role is not a favoured thing in the military," said Burger.

While enforcing lockdown regulations, SANDF members are meant to be accompanied by members of the police "but there will be instances where that is not the case and the military finds themselves in the position where they have to execute the powers they've been given, which is to arrest someone," said Burger.

Peddle said while the rapid deployment meant there was little time for extra training, members of the military do have experience in working with communities.

"It's necessary to understand that they have been doing these things for some time," said Peddle, who was responsible for planning deployments during his time at the SANDF.

He said during operations in the Demo-

cratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan and on South Africa's border, SANDF members often had to work with communities and sometimes took on policing functions while maintaining peace.

Soldiers are patrolling the streets where they live and were raised and were accustomed to the environment, unlike when they are deployed abroad or like SADF members during apartheid, added Peddle.

Confronting the idea that SANDF members were trained to kill and shouldn't be deployed in communities, Peddle said officers had access to non-lethal crowd control weapons such as shotguns with rubber bullets and had been trained to always use minimum force.

Videos have been circulated of the SANDF allegedly abusing and humiliating members of the public during the lockdown and members are being investigated for allegedly killing a 40-year-old man in Alexandra, Collins Khosa.

The curfew banning any movement without a permit between 8pm and 5am, which was announced on Wednesday evening as South Africa moves to Level 4 of its lockdown, could lead to more cases of abuse.

Burger said it was "rather ridiculous" to impose a curfew while easing regulations and questioned whether SANDF members and the police would understand their role.

"The question is now: Will they know how to enforce this? I have a strong feeling that we may see a rise in incidents of what we regard as abuse simply because the police and the soldiers out there are not quite clear how to enforce the curfew arrangements," he said.

Peddle said the curfew would require an "enormous" number of soldiers and police and would be difficult to enforce.

"I think it's an impracticable exercise that will gradually dissolve itself," he said.

— DM

# Western Europe relaxes virus measures, Russia numbers spike

**B**ARCELONA, Spain — Spaniards filled the streets Saturday to exercise outside in gorgeous spring weather for the first time in seven weeks, while German children rushed to playgrounds as countries in Western Europe moved ahead with the gradual relaxation of coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

Russia and Pakistan, however, reported their biggest one-day spikes in new infections, in a sign the pandemic is far from over.

Concern was growing in Moscow that hospitals might become overwhelmed after Russia recorded a new one-day high of 9 633 new infections, a 20 percent increase over Friday's count, which itself was a new daily record.

Russia has now reported 124 054 total cases, with 15 013 recoveries and 1 222 fatalities. True numbers are believed to be higher because not everyone is tested and Russian tests are reported to be only 70 percent to 80 percent accurate.

Moscow's mayor said this week that officials are considering establishing temporary hospitals at sports complexes and shopping malls to deal with the influx of patients. Infection cases have reached the highest levels of government, with both the prime minister and the construction minister contracting the virus.

In Russia's far northeast, officials said 3 000 of 10 000 workers at a vast natural gas field had tested positive, Russian news agencies reported. Employees of one of the contractors at the field reportedly held a protest this week claiming insufficient measures were being taken against the virus' spread.

At the same time, Spain, one of the worst-hit countries in the world with 25,100 deaths and more than 216 500 cases of COVID-19, was rolling back some emergency measures that helped bring the outbreak under control and save hospitals from collapse. A huge field hospital at a Madrid convention centre was closed Friday, and the capital has already closed a makeshift morgue at an ice rink in a shopping mall.

Since Spain's lockdown started 14 March, only adults have been able to leave home, for shopping for food, medicine and other essential goods, and to walk dogs close to home. The lockdown is credited with succeeding in reducing daily increases of infections from more than 20 percent to less than 1 percent.

As restrictions were relaxed Saturday, people ran, walked, or rode bicycles under a brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the still-off-limits beach.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," 36-year-old Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona. "Some people think it may be too early, as I do, but it is also important to do exercise



SHOPPERS wait on one of several lines to make purchases at the farmer's market at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn.

for health reasons."

The government has set up time slots for age groups and activities, and social-distancing measures requiring people to stay 6 feet apart. On Monday, face masks will be required for people riding public transit but many of those out and about on Saturday weren't wearing them. Until now, the government had only highly recommended the masks in trains, metros and buses in addition to social distancing rules.

Spain has detailed a complex rollback plan that will vary by province. Those with the fewest cases and with health care resources in place to handle a rebound of the virus will be the first to enjoy further loosening of the measures.

"We must take it with caution and responsibility," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on Twitter. "The virus is still with us. We need to respect the rules as well as the guidelines for hygiene and social distancing."

The virus has killed more than 238 000 people worldwide, including more than 65,000

in the United States and more than 20 000 each in Italy, Britain and France, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. Health experts warn a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday he hopes the total number of U.S. deaths will be below 100 000, which he acknowledged is a "horrible number."

As the crisis stabilizes in some European countries and American states, governments are easing the shutdown of businesses that plunged the global economy into its deepest slump since the 1930's and wiped out millions of jobs.

Trump, who is running for re-election in the midst of a U.S. economic slump that has wiped out more than 10 million jobs, is pressing state governors to lift controls despite warnings by some health experts that might lead to a spike in infections.

In Italy, which has seen the most deaths in Europe with more than 28,000, people looked

enviously at Spain as they awaited their own relaxation of restrictions now that the number of new cases has levelled out.

Italy's special commissioner for combating the coronavirus, Domenico Arcuri, said that the gradual loosening of the two-month lockdown, starting Monday, signals a new challenge, "which by now is clear to everyone; we don't know how long it will last."

More masks will be distributed for people riding public transportation, whose numbers are expected to climb as the manufacturing and construction sectors emerge from the lockdown. Stores, restaurants, bars and cultural sites like museums remain closed until 18 May. Germany, which has registered more than 164 000 cases but seen only about 6,700 deaths, has strict social-distancing guidelines but never restricted people going outside for exercise. Smaller shops have already opened and this is the first weekend in which playgrounds, museums and zoos are permitted to open as well.

Elsewhere, China, where the pandemic began in December, reported a single new infection Saturday, extending a steady decline in confirmed cases. South Korea reported six new cases on Saturday, none of them in the hard-hit city of Daegu in the southeast. Both countries are easing anti-virus controls and reviving economic activity.

But Pakistan on Saturday announced 1 297 new cases, raising the total in the country of 220 million people to 18 114.

The increase coincides with increased testing. The government said more than 9 000 tests were conducted in the previous 24 hours. Prime Minister Imran Khan has set a goal of 20 000 per day. Photos in newspapers showed large numbers of the faithful at Pakistani mosques and only some following social distancing rules. Khan's government said it might ease controls, but doctors have pleaded for stricter lockdowns, warning an explosion of infections would overwhelm hospitals that have only 3 000 intensive care beds nationwide.

Africa now has more than 40 000 reported cases, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. There have also been more than 1 600 deaths across the continent from the virus, which has been reported in every country except for tiny and mountainous Lesotho. — AP

## Sun draws many out in US, Europe; Russia virus numbers grow

**N**EW YORK — Gorgeous spring weather across the United States and Europe on Saturday drew people cooped up inside for weeks outside to soak in the sun, even as additional coronavirus hot spots in Russia and Pakistan emerged.

Though grateful to be outdoors, people were still wary — masks were worn everywhere, even on southern U.S. beaches and by some joggers in Spain. A New York City farmer's market enforced the familiar 6 feet (2 meters) of space between people waiting to buy spring flowers. Mothers in Central Park reminded their kids to give people space. And small groups of picnickers kept their safe distances, while joggers moved past each other without a glance.

Retired New York attorney Stan Neustadter pulled down his mask to say it's been important to his spirit to get out. "Why live like a rabbit? Plus, I'm approaching 78, I've had a great run," Neustadter said.

Police and park officials were spread out across New York City, which sent out 1,000 officers to enforce social distancing on the warmest day since mid-March. But they were more likely to break up large groups, leaving the nuisances of social distancing and hanging out safely outside to New Yorkers themselves.

New York Govnor Andrew Cuomo said people need to go outside and enjoy the warm weather.

"Go for a walk, but respect the social distancing and wear a mask," Cuomo said.

With gigs drying up at clubs and concert halls all over town, German native Julia Banholzer, a saxophonist, said she has taken to playing al fresco in Central Park for whoever happens by. On Saturday that was a steady stream of folks, most wearing masks, who left tips for her trio as they worked their way through a set of jazz standards.

"It's great to have an audience after all these weeks," she said. "All my dates have been cancelled through September and I don't know if any will come back this year. New York is a tough place, but this is just another tough period we need to get through."

Meanwhile, fighter jets from the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds drew people outside as they flew over Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington in honour of health care workers. In Atlanta, drivers stopped on a major highway through the city or found open places to look to the sky on rooftops or a cemetery.

Elsewhere in the world, the pandemic's danger was still evident. Russia and Pakistan reported their biggest one-day spikes in new infections.

Russia reported around 125 000 cases and more than 1 200 deaths. True numbers are believed to be much higher because not everyone is tested. In the far northeast, 3 000 of 10 000 workers at a vast natural gas field tested positive, Russian news agencies reported.

Moscow's mayor said this week that officials are considering establishing temporary hospitals at sports complexes and shopping malls to deal with the influx of patients. Infection cases have reached the highest levels of government, with both the prime minister and the construction minister contracting the virus.

The virus has killed more than 238 000 people worldwide, including more than 65,000 in the United States and more than 24 000 each in Italy, Britain, France and Spain, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. Health experts warn a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. For some, especially older adults and those with health problems, it can cause severe illness such as pneumonia, or death.

There are economic factors to consider as well. In some areas of the United States, reopening is being pushed to ease the shutdown of businesses that plunged the global

economy into its deepest slump since the 1930's and wiped out millions of jobs.

It has created a patchwork of rules across the 50 states. In South Carolina, where about 20 percent of the state's revenue comes from tourism, hotels along beaches were allowed to reopen Friday. Webcams showed dozens of people on the beach Saturday, but pools still closed. South Carolina also hasn't reopened dine-in restaurants, unlike neighbouring Georgia. Some U.S. states haven't even started the reopening process.

Business owners have also been left wondering if customers will return. On a postcard perfect spring day, Detroit's Eastern Market had far fewer customers and vendors than normal at the farmer's market.

Jill and Mark Thomas said they felt safe selling bottles of homemade wine from their Unwined Winery, but it wasn't the same in the COVID-19 world.

"It's easier when you can get samples to people," said Jill Thomas. "We're not allowed to do that now."

In Spain, where COVID-19 has caused more than 25 100 deaths, people ventured out Saturday for the first time since a March 14 lockdown.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," 36-year-old Cris-

tina Palomeque said. "Some people think it may be too early, as I do, but it is also important to do exercise for health reasons."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said his country deserved relief after weeks of confinement, but he asked citizens to remain vigilant about virus precautions.

"Until we have a vaccine, we are going to see more outbreaks," Sánchez said. "What we need to guarantee is that these outbreaks do not put our national health system in danger."

Italy, which has suffered more than 28 700 deaths, the highest number in Europe, plans to begin easing its two-month lockdown starting Monday.

But Pakistan appears to be joining Russia with rapidly increasing case counts. On Saturday, Pakistan announced nearly 1 300 new cases, raising the total in the country of 220 million people to about 18 000.

Photos in newspapers showed large numbers of the faithful at Pakistani mosques and only some following social distancing rules. Prime Minister Imran Khan's government said it might ease controls, but doctors have pleaded for stricter lockdowns, warning an explosion of infections would overwhelm hospitals that have only 3 000 intensive care beds nationwide.

— AP

# Mindset growth during a pandemic

**I**T goes without saying that businesses around the world are going through one of the most radical changes in the history of work. As much of the world grapples with how to work in this new environment, leaders are learning how to work, lead, and manage employees from a distance, many for the first time in their careers.

Sustaining business operations while keeping your people calm, safe, and as productive as possible during this crisis is no doubt a daunting task, but shifting how you think can help everyone in your organization think differently too. And that's exactly what your business needs right now.

### It's all in your mind

At 15Five we like to foster and maintain a growth mindset, which, if you're not familiar, is the belief that abilities can be developed. This way of thinking is crucial all the time, but perhaps now more than ever.

Developing a growth mindset is vital to achieving your highest level of leadership presence. It's by far the most critical factor in being an effective leader in "normal" times, but it's even more key now as you're working and managing others remotely probably for the first time.

### Getting started

Getting into the right mindset is the equivalent to putting on your own oxygen mask before helping others. And that starts first and foremost with believing that YOU CAN DO IT. Maybe this seems obvious and goes without saying, but you shouldn't underestimate how important this starting point is. The belief that YOU CAN and WILL be an effective leader as you and your people shift to remote work is paramount.

Consider this time to be an opportunity to grow and expand your leadership skills. Working and leading remotely will force you to invent new ways of leading; this is the epitome of a growth mindset. This location change may have taken away some of the crutches that you had been leaning on as a leader, but you now have the opportunity to broaden and deepen

your skills, which you will have to lean on in future disruptions.

Embrace the challenge to become a better leader and manager, and demonstrate a commitment to your own growth and development. Remember, you don't have to have all the answers, but you do need to take responsibility.

When it comes to your leadership and how you need to show up every day, here are four important to think and operate from as a remote leader:

1. Be present
2. Stay professional
3. Maintain structure
4. Don't forget your company's purpose

### Be present

Your full presence and attention matters. Since you are not physically present, you need to show up in other ways. People can feel your commitment and your energy across a computer screen just as they can face to face. You need to do more than just "show up to work," you need to amplify your presence and truly show up energetically.

There are some actions you can take to help you get into the right mindset.

- At home, it is important that you make sure you have an "office" — a quiet, private space to minimize distractions, interruptions. If space is limited, just get creative and find someplace to call your own. I've seen some really great examples, like offices in the garage or basement; desks on ironing boards, etc.
- Use video as much as possible with your camera on. (I'll share more about this later).
- Set boundaries and make agreements with your family/household to avoid upsets and complications in your personal relationships. Create space for yourself both physically and mentally to "be at work."
- Fully commit to taking regular breaks to refresh and recharge. This has always been true, but in crisis-mode, this is crucial for your well-being. Research shows us that honouring your unique human rhythms will naturally help you to be more productive and

creative. Remember, the normal distractions that happen in your office may no longer be there, so I recommend scheduling time for this so that you don't forget.

### Stay professional

As a leader, your appearance always matters. Show up like you always do, if not better. Dress as if you were going into the office for a meeting.

When using video, make sure you have good lighting and full-face screen positioning. Lean in and look directly into the camera (or as close as possible) so your face and eyes can clearly be seen by others.

### Maintain structure

Integrity matters. This is no time to get sloppy. If you do, what will your people do? It's important to manage everyone's integrity around timeliness and being present and focused in your meetings and conversations. And that starts with you. As the leader, you need to set the pace and demonstrate to others how well it can work to work remotely.

### Don't forget your company's purpose

Regardless of the current circumstances, it is important that you continue to stand for your company's purpose, mission, values, i.e., who you are as a company, why you exist, what you are about, and the difference you're making in the world.

Right now, having a sense of purpose is more important than it has ever been. Don't ignore the psychological impact physical isolation is having on your workforce, not to mention that many people are also full-time parents and caregivers. The mission that your people signed up for will help to sustain their commitment, diligence, and passion during this time.

This is clearly not business as usual, and there can be a lot of confusion, anxiety, and a feeling of isolation setting in with our people. So as people leaders, we must rapidly adapt in order to support our people, teams, and businesses. Getting into a growth mindset, is the first step.

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# LeFA yet to decide on soccer season



MOKHOSI Mohapi.

Moorosi Tsiane

**L**ESOTHO Football Association (LeFA) secretary general Mokhosi Mohapi says it is still unclear what will happen to the domestic leagues in the wake of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) induced lockdown.

The local leagues have been on suspension since mid-March just before the government declared a state of emergency and subsequently imposed a national lockdown. The lockdown started on 30 March and was supposed to have ended on 21 April. It was however, extended to Tuesday but it is still unclear whether or not there will be a further extension.

Although Lesotho has not recorded any cases, the authorities are on high alert to avoid possible spread of the virus considering that neighbouring South Africa has now recorded nearly 6 000 cases and 116 deaths. Globally, infections are over 3.4 million while over 240 000 deaths have been recorded.

The pandemic has brought the sporting world to a standstill, with the world's biggest sporting event- the Olympics-being shelved for next year. The Olympics were meant to be held in Tokyo in July and August this year.

Similarly, Lesotho's sporting activities, including soccer have all been put on ice.

Speculation has been rampant in different countries over the fate of soccer leagues with the French League 1 on Friday deciding to award Paris Saint-Germain the title through a points-per-game system. The system took into account the performance of clubs in the matches already played to determine the final standings in the Ligue 1 table.

Mohapi told the *Sunday Express* on Wednesday that they are still looking at their options along with the Premier

League Management Committee (PLMC).

"On Monday 27 April 2020, the LeFA national executive committee (NEC) and the PLMC met to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the soccer season," Mohapi said.

"Both the NEC and the PLMC have observed that there are four probable scenarios that can be looked forward to. These are:

- At the very worst case the season being aborted. This will render all matches played in the leagues void and therefore no team will be considered for neither promotion nor relegation. No champion will be declared.

- The second option is to extend the season. This means that instead of ending the leagues by 31 May 2020, some games would be played later.

- The third option is that league matches may be played without spectators at designated stadia only. This would be effected if the government eases restrictions on the lockdowns and downscales the risks. However, only players, club officials, match officials, medical personnel and few media practitioners would attend the matches under extremely stringent measures.

- The last option is that matches could be played at designated stadia with spectators. This option is highly improbable given that the Coronavirus continues to spread in other countries."

He said the decision that LeFA will end up taking would be informed by the advice that they receive from the government.

"We will rely on what the government directs us to do in its pursuit of avoiding a possible spread of the virus.

"Both the NEC and PLMC are aware of the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the clubs and are brainstorming on what form of relief LeFA can roll out," Mohapi said.

## Malane ready for national team challenge

Leemisa Thuseho

**F**OLLOWING his debut senior national soccer team call-up, LCS right back Thabang Malane says he is ready to deliver once he gets the opportunity.

Likuena coach Thabo Senong in February this year named Malane in his squad for the back-to-back clash with Benin in the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers. The matches were initially pencilled in for 23 and 31 March 2020 but were postponed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Malane told the *Sunday Express* on Friday that a national team call-up was every player's dream hence he is ready to grab the chance with both hands when he gets the opportunity to play.

"I am happy with the call-up because it is every player's dream to represent their country at national level," Malane said.

"I am ready for the challenge."

Despite performing so well for his team in the 2017/18 Econet Premier League season, Makae did not see the opportunity coming this early.

"I didn't see this one com-

ing because most players in the same position were also playing really well. However, I am ready now that I have been called-up."

He said he would leave no stone unturned to ensure that he impressed the Likuena technical team and prove that he deserves to play for the national team.

"I want to deliver my best and prove that my call up wasn't driven by favouritism."

"Just being called for the national team is adequate motivation that will force me to work hard.

"When I was called, I also received a warm welcome from the seniors. They treated me so well and have been extremely supportive."

Malane was part of the Under-20 national team that represented Lesotho at the 2016 Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (COSAFA) championship in South Africa.

He believes the under-20 experience may help him survive national team pressure.

During the ongoing lockdown, Malane is training at home to ensure he maintains fitness when the domestic league resumes.



THABANG Malane. (in green jersey)

## Makae stuck but happy in Switzerland

Leemisa Thuseho

**L**ESOTHO'S mountain bike champion Tumelo Makae could be struck in Switzerland at the World Cycling Training Centre but he is happy about the misfortune. This is because during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) induced global lockdowns, he has had continued access to all training facilities.

Had he managed to travel back home when several other athletes from the same facility left for their respective countries, then he would have failed to access any such facilities in Lesotho.

"I have continued my normal training routines without any restrictions," Makae told the *Sunday Express* on Friday.

He said being in Switzerland has also given him access to his coach, who is helping him with his training.

Makae has been stuck at the centre since March when his fellow athletes left for their home countries in March this year on the back of the spread of the deadly virus. He failed to travel home in time due to the closure of South African airspace since there are no direct flights from anywhere in the world save for from OR Tambo in South Africa.

By the time he wanted to travel from Switzerland, South Africa had already closed its airspace.

Makae is in Switzerland under the Olympic Solidarity Scholarship, a facility for athletes who are preparing for the Olympics. His scholarship started in 2017 and it was expected to end this year August. However, it has now been postponed to next year Tokyo Olympics. The Tokyo Olympics were meant to have been held in July and August this year but were postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Although Switzerland is one of the European countries that are affected by Coronavirus, Makae allayed fears that he could be at risk.

"I am doing well and I am safe," Makae said.

Switzerland has so far reported 29 586 confirmed cases with 1 737 death while 23 400 have recovered.

Despite the huge numbers of infections, Switzerland started relaxing lockdown regulations last month.



Malane ready  
for national  
team challenge  
P17



# Matlama defender cheats death

Moorosi Tsiane

**M**ATLAMA defender Stephen Essong Eyong survived death by a whisker on Thursday morning. This after he nearly suffocated from fumes emitted by a paraffin stove at his Khubetsoana home in Maseru.

Team manager Liphoo Tshepe told the *Sunday Express* on Friday that the Gabonese player was stable and recovering well after the incident.

Eyong was rushed to Willis Hospital in the wee hours of Thursday but Tshepe said the hard-tackling defender was released on Friday and was now out of danger.

"It took us all by surprise when we got the message that he had been rushed to the hospital and the report that we got is that he nearly suffocated from the fumes emitted by a heater that they were using along with his girlfriend," Tshepe said.

"They had slept leaving it on.

"Apparently the girlfriend was the first to be hospitalised only for Stephen to encounter problems later."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that about 7 million people die every year from exposure to fine particles in polluted air that lead to diseases such as stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections, including pneumonia.

However, indoor pollution accounts for an average of 1.6 million deaths across the world annually according to *ourworldindata.org*.

These figures are mainly in developing countries where populations have no access to cleaner cooking and heating fuels.

Tshepe said they were happy that the defender had recovered and said they are hoping that he would be in the right space when Econet Premier League action resumes.

All local soccer leagues have been suspended since March when the Lesotho Football Association decided to adhere to World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on social distancing to avoid the spread of the deadly Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Although Lesotho is yet to record any cases, authorities are on high alert to avoid the possible spread of the virus that has so far killed 119 people in neighbouring South Africa and infected over 5 000 others.

Tshepe said the club was grateful that the defender was attended to promptly.

"It was a dangerous situation and anything could have happened but fortunately they were assisted fast.

He looked recovered when he was discharged and we are hoping that no other problems will surface when the league resumes.

"There are no doubts about his physical fitness although we would want him to get adequate time to recover from the incident before he starts playing again."

Lepoqo, as Eyong is affectionately known by Matlama supporters, joined the Sea Point outfit at the beginning of the 2019/20 season following his one season spell at Lioli.

Since then, he has become a regular for the reigning Econet Premier League champions.



ESSONG Eyong.