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IOI expresses grave concern about the situation in the Kingdom of Lesotho regarding the Ombudsman

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) has become aware of very concerning developments affecting the Office of the Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Lesotho. In the name of our institution and its members all around the world, we would like to express our grave concern regarding the recent public search of Ombudsman Leshele Thoahlane by State police in the room where he was conducting hearings.

As the only global organization for the cooperation of 191 independent Ombudsman institutions worldwide, the IOI is committed to promoting and strengthening the concept of ombudsmanship. In order to further the cooperation and networking, the IOI focuses on enabling the membership of Ombudsman institutions around the world and supports Ombudsman institutions under threat.

Independence is a fundamental aspect of Ombudsman institutions and should be guaranteed by provisions in the national legislation, preferably in the Constitution, as well as in practical and functional terms. The independence of an Ombudsman is therefore also an important requirement for membership in the IOI. According to Article 2 and 6 of the IOI Bylaws, an Ombudsman may „not receive any direction from any public authority which would compromise its independence“.

It is therefore with great concern that the IOI has learned that the Ombudsman of Lesotho, Advocate Leshele Thoahlane, was publicly searched by the police in the room where he was conducting hearings, in the presence of citizens and journalists. These actions are completely unacceptable as they demonstrate a total lack of respect for the Office of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman himself. This has the potential to undermine the authority of the Office in the eyes of the citizens of Lesotho who might become reluctant to use their right to complain about

the administration. This would be to the detriment of the principles of good administration and the rule of law.

The IOI therefore expresses its grave concern with regard to the recent developments in Lesotho and reiterates its commitment to strengthening and upholding the independence of Ombudsman institutions around the world.



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