

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Overview

Since May 2021, FSG has paid close attention to the media landscape in Lesotho and Southern Africa and has worked constructively with reporters to provide accurate statements, legal documents, and interviews across many of the leading print and digital titles. We remain grateful to the media for the accuracy and rigour of their reporting.

### FSG: Media Statement

The following statement is being released to members of the press in Lesotho following the appearance of an opaque new website registered in South Africa, and a series of ‘fake news’ articles the website has published regarding FSG’s dispute with the GOL.

### A spokesperson for FSG said:

*“We are deeply concerned about the accuracy, impartiality and reporting standards displayed in a series of articles published by a shadowy new entrant to Lesotho’s media landscape: Lesotho Express.*

*Lesotho Express appears to have no editor, no contact details, no following, and only one by-lined journalist: Nthakoana Ngatane. Since the website’s launch – less than a month after legal proceedings between FSG and the GOL were made public – it has displayed a blatant preoccupation with attacking our legal case and its reporting is riddled with factual inaccuracies clearly calculated to deceive readers. Taken together, this raises the suspicion that Lesotho Express is masquerading as a legitimate news entity whose true purpose is to discredit FSG.*

*We support a free press in Lesotho and South Africa. Our engagement with the media to-date demonstrates our whole-hearted commitment to transparency and to assisting the press in their reporting. It is because we share Basotho’s appetite for truth in these legal proceedings that we cannot stand by and let falsehoods be presented as legitimate journalism.*

*Whoever is behind this website is peddling fake news, and we refute every allegation that has been made against FSG by Ms Ngatane and Lesotho Express. We urge members of the public and the press to express extreme caution over the truthfulness of its reporting. We welcome meaningful engagement with all members of the press, but in this instance FSG’s representatives have now been forced to engage Lesotho Express with a view to commencing defamation and other proceedings. Part of this engagement will be to determine if GOL has been involved with the establishment and running of this website.”*

**ENDS.**

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### Notes to Editors:

- Lesotho Express was registered online on 4 June 2021. The website began publishing news content on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and has published a steady stream of general interest articles since.
- The website has no contact information, no ‘About Us’ page, no ownership information, and only one by-lined journalist.

- The website is run from South Africa but appears to be controlled from Lesotho.
- The website maintains two social media accounts – both created in July 2021 – each with a low follower count and an even lower engagement rate.
- In many instances, advertising links present on the website appear to be inoperative.
- It is possible that this website is part of a deliberate online influencing campaign being conducted by either the administration or supporters of it.