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DCEO USING TORTURE TO EXTRACT FALSE CONFESSIONS

Frazer Solar GmbH (FSG) is concerned but not surprised at the Metro Lesotho article of 15 February 2023 outlining how Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) officials are using torture to extract false confessions for non-existent crimes.

The Metro article explains how two businesspeople have been tortured to force them to falsely implicate themselves and a government official of committing non-existent crimes of corruption and money laundering.

Complaining to the court at the 'torture and inhumane treatment' meted out by the DCEO, the judge presiding has ordered DCEO to stop 'assaulting' people. Whether the DCEO complies with this order remains to be seen.

A FSG spokesperson said "This shows a failure of the core tenets of a free and open society being presumed innocence, adherence to the rule of law, and following due process. Unless the government takes steps, Lesotho is moving closer towards being a failed state. If Prime Minister Matekane is serious about improving the Kingdom, he can start with the DCEO."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Attached is the Metro article.

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Feb. 15, 2023
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Justice 'Mafellei Ralebese

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- Business owner accuses DCEO of assault and inhumane treatment

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If the two corruption cases that the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) is currently investigating against the former chief of the Disaster Management Authority (DMA), 'Makhotso Mahosi are anything to go by, the besieged lady will soon be in a soup.

This, after the graft body recently brought both matters to the High Court accusing Mahosi and two local companies of being involved in corruption and money laundering.

In the first case, the court heard how, Bokang Semoko, owner of Pro Air Solutions, a company that fixes air-conditioners was asked to report himself at the DCEO office in Maseru on February 2.

Upon arrival at the office, Semoko met five DCEO officials who introduced themselves as Pitso, Sello, and Autata along with two other unidentified men.

He said the five told him they were investigating some wrongdoing, which allegedly occurred in relation to repair work his company was supposed to do at the 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre's air conditioning systems.

"They claimed that my company had been paid without doing any work allegedly through corruption machinations facilitated by the DMA CEO, Mahosi," he said.

In his affidavit, Semoko said DCEO officials further warned him that they were not interested in him, but wanted his assistance in nailing Mahosi.

He said denied the corruption accusations, showing that his company had in fact finished the work it was engaged to do at the convention centre.

"The officers ordered me to leave my father's car, which I was driving, at their office," he said.

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from him, the court was told.

"Instead, the officers asked me whether or not I was ready to disclose the sum of money I was paid in order to get the job I did at the convention centre.

"When I denied involvement in any wrongdoing, two of the officers, namely, Autata and Sello became very furious."

He said Autata hit him repeatedly on the back with his fists and ordered him to perform several squatting exercises.

"Sello kept stepping on his toes and slapping me numerous times across the face," he said, adding that he ended up falsely implicating Mahosi to avoid further

torture, though Autata had by then cuffed his hands.

He has since lodged assault and torture charges against the DCEO officials.

He said he was ordered to return to the DCEO premises on February 8 and 9 for a more stringent interrogation session.

The only truth, he said they wanted was for him to falsely implicate Mahosi in a crime she had no idea of.

"It was clear that the police failed to protect me. Although I was willing to cooperate with the DCEO officers, I was, however, worried that I would be subjected to further torture and inhumane treatment.

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Semoko's lawyer Advocate Napo Mafaesa told *Public Eye* that said the DCEO wanted his client to falsely implicate himself and Mahosi for a crime they did not commit.

For her part, the DCEO spokesperson, 'Matlhokomelo Senoko said they could not comment at this stage as the case was under investigation.

The anti-corruption outfit has also accused Ketso Ketso and his company, Maru-a-pula (PTY) LTD of money laundering.

This, after he had won an M9 million tender to construct the road from Tsifa-li-mali to 'Malesaoana in Leribe.

The DCEO alleges that Mahosi received bribes from Maru-a-pula and other companies in order to fast-track their payments.

But in her defence, Mahosi told the court of how she was forced by the DCEO to admit that Ketso bribed her to accelerate his payments

Following the DCEO investigations that ensued, Ketso's bank accounts held at Standard Lesotho Bank were frozen

Ketso then consequently filed an application in the High Court, challenging the freezing of his accounts.

Justice 'Mafelile Ralebese presiding over the case ruled that the DCEO should refrain from assaulting the complainant.

She further instructed the DCEO to allow Ketso's lawyer to be present during his interrogations by the DCEO officials.

The matter continues on February 27.



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