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Minister of Law and Justice
Hon Richard Ramoeletsi
P.O. BOX 33
100, Maseru
Lesotho

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Dear Hon. Richard Ramoeletsi,

**I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent findings of human rights violations – including torture and other ill-treatment – against detainees at Maseru Centre Correctional Institution, Lesotho.**

On 22 December 2023, eight detainees - **Sebilo Sebilo, Mots’oane Machai, Nthathane Motanyane, Liphapang Sefako, Motsieloa Leutsoa, Mohlalefi Seitlheko, Marasi Moleli, Litekanyo Nyakane**, **and others** who are awaiting trial at Maseru Centre Correctional Institution (MMCI) - were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) officers. On 22 December 2023, the detainees' relatives visited MMCI and found them with visible injuries on their bodies. The detainees told their relatives they were beaten with various objects by the institution authorities during a search operation.

The day after, on 23 December 2023, relatives of the detainees filed an urgent application before the Maseru Court which sought to declare that MMCI officers and their subordinates acted unlawfully by imposing corporal punishment on the detainees and that their decision to refuse their applications to visit the detainees was unlawful. Regarding the unlawful imposition of corporal punishment, on 27 January 2024, the court found that it was unable to determine the circumstances that led to the injuries sustained.

As you may recall, you have previously expressed your support for an independent inquiry into the allegations of torture made by the detainees at the MMCI. Following an investigation it carried out on its own initiative in December 2023, on 19 March 2024, the Office of the Ombudsman released its own report which uncovered a disturbing pattern of abuse, including torture and excessive use of force, against detainees at the institution; where on 22 December 2023, the detainees were subjected to beatings with various weapons by correctional officers who then denied them medical treatment for the injuries they sustained.

**I urge you to ensure the eight named detainees and others held at Maseru Centre Correctional Institution are protected from torture and other ill-treatment including by taking immediate steps to implement the recommendations put forth by the Office of the Ombudsman. I also call on you to ensure accountability by holding those suspected to be responsible for the abuses to account and taking concrete steps to reform the correctional system to ensure that it upholds international human rights standards. This includes revising laws and regulations governing detention, improving conditions of confinement, and promoting a culture of respect for human rights among correctional staff.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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