

LESOTHO 2020 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliamentary government. Under the constitution the king is head of state but does not actively participate in political activities. The prime minister is head of government and has executive authority. In 2017 then prime minister Pakalitha Mosisili of the Democratic Congress Party lost a vote of no confidence and the snap election that followed. All major parties accepted the outcome, and Motsoahae Thomas Thabane of the All Basotho Convention party formed a coalition government and became prime minister. Mosisili transferred power peacefully to Thabane, and Mathibeli Mokhothu assumed leadership of the opposition. Local and international observers assessed the election as peaceful, credible, and transparent. During the year Thabane's coalition government collapsed and the All Basotho Convention party and the Democratic Congress Party formed a new coalition government. On May 20, former finance minister Moeketsi Majoro replaced Thabane as prime minister.

The security forces consist of the Lesotho Defense Force, Lesotho Mounted Police Service, National Security Service, and Lesotho Correctional Service. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service is responsible for internal security. The Lesotho Defense Force maintains external security and may support police when the Lesotho Mounted Police Service commissioner requests assistance. The National Security Service is an intelligence service that provides information on possible threats to internal and external security. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service reports to the minister of police and public safety; the Lesotho Defense Force and National Security Service to the minister of defense; and the Lesotho Correctional Service to the minister of justice and law. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces. Members of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service committed numerous abuses, and Lesotho Defense Force members committed some human rights abuses.

Significant human rights issues included: unlawful or arbitrary killings; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with

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The Ministry of Labor has minimal jurisdiction over the informal economy, where an estimated half of the country's workers were employed. The ministry's inspectorate noted penalties were commensurate with those for similar violations, but they were not applied.

The Ministry of Labor prepares an annual report on workplace fatalities and accidents. According to the report, from January through August, there were 237 accidents, of which 23 persons died and 214 individuals (160 men and 54 women) sustained serious injuries. The affected sectors included the textile, manufacturing, security, retail, and construction sectors.

Working conditions for foreign or migrant workers were the same as those of residents, and migrants enjoyed equal protection under the law in the formal sector.

The law does not explicitly provide for workers to remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. Workers have the right to report incidents that put their lives in danger to their safety officers or safety committees. In most cases workers reported being pressured not to report violations. Nevertheless, code provisions on safety in the workplace and dismissal imply such a dismissal would be illegal. Authorities protected employees when violations of the law were reported.